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THE CRESSET

- *How T. S. Eliot Has Gone to the Cats*
- *The Liberal Arts in a Christian University*
- *Fundamentalism and American Society*

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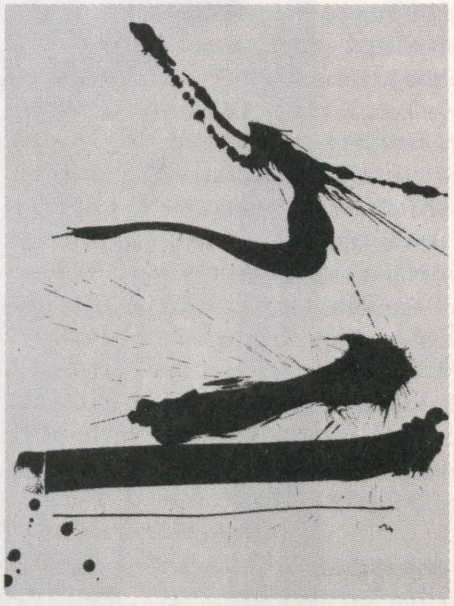

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RHWB

IN LUCE TUA

Comment on Contemporary Affairs by the Editor

What Ever Happened to Civil Rights?—II

Is the Reagan Administration racist? Black leaders are asking that question—a question that implies its own answer—with a degree of intensity and even desperation that reflects the pervasive discontent within the black community over the state of race relations in America today.

As we suggested last month, we do not share the view that either the current Administration or the society at large has capitulated to racism. While currents of racial prejudice continue to flow in America, they probably run less deep—they certainly have less legitimacy—than they have in the past. There's still a lot of redneck racism out there, but among the generally well-educated people who make the society's most important political and economic decisions, racism—at least the overt and socially-damaging racism of the past—no longer holds sway. The movement toward racial equality has indeed fallen on hard times, but those hard times have to do less with resurgent racism or moral indifference than with a genuine sense of bafflement over how best to proceed.

As was also noted last month, we need not presuppose any deep moral sensibilities on the part of white Americans to imagine that they understand that the degradation of black people operates little more in the interests of whites than of blacks. Slums, poverty, and the social pathologies that go with them degrade us all, regardless of color and regardless of the state of our moral imaginations. Whatever psychic benefits some whites might derive from clinging to a sense of racial superiority, those can hardly compensate in America today for the grievous and evident social costs that racial inequality exacts with respect to crime rates, welfare expenditures, visual blight, civil disorder, and the general deterioration of the social fabric.

Assuming, then, that even those of the most modest good will must see that invidious racial distinctions harm us all, how do we account for the persistence of racial inequality? It is our collective dilemma that the answer to that question involves us in so many complexities, ambiguities, and ideological conundrums that we are tempted to turn from it in despair to other social problems that, however difficult or even intractable, offer at least some promise of return on our efforts to deal with them. The tragedy of civil rights in America today is not that nothing has been tried, but that so much has been tried to so little avail. This is not to say that we have done enough—clearly we have not—but rather that our problem consists less in summoning up the will to do more than in figuring out just what it is that we should be doing more of.

It would be wrong, of course, to suggest that nothing has changed for black people in America. In our understandable despair over how far we have yet to go, we ought not forget how far we have already come. In the area of race relations, we are a transformed society from what we were a quarter-century ago. An article a while back in the liberal *New Republic* argued that the civil rights movement of the past few decades has produced "the most massive change in racial attitudes, in behavior by whites, and in the law that ever has been wrought peacefully in a major industrial country." Allowing for a measure of hyperbole, and acknowledging as well that the degree of change may suggest more as to how awful things were before than as to how much better they are now, it remains true that the term "civil rights revolution" involves more than a loose figure of speech. The marches, the demonstrations, the moral appeals, the suffering: these were not all for nothing. By any reasonable measure, things are substantially better for black people in America today than they were as of 1960.

Yet so much misery remains. The figures on the incidence among blacks of poverty, unemployment, family disintegration, illegitimate birth, and crime remain depressing, and in many cases they continue to head in the wrong direction. For every datum of improvement we might point to, another, contrary statistic can be summoned to make any talk of progress appear mindlessly optimistic. Something, we tell ourselves, must be done. And it is at this point that we begin falling all over our good intentions and expressions of good will and getting precisely nowhere. If rhetoric could make our race problems right, misery and inequality would long since have been left behind us. Policy, however, presents a few more problems.

The Reagan Administration is operating on the obvious assumption that the liberal policies embodied in the Great Society and in subsequent similar programs have failed and need to be drastically revised, if not simply discarded. The Administration wants a sharp break with the past, and it is the process of making that break that has aroused the cries of protest, indignation, and outrage that issue from civil rights leaders with routine regularity. Those cries—and more, the genuine suffering that lies behind the somewhat stylized and predictable rhetoric—need to be heard, but we should first examine with some care the case the Reagan people make against the old policies and in favor of those they

History may well record that the worst error the modern civil rights movement made was to invest so much of its time, energy, and moral fervor in such a dubious cause as school busing.

would offer as substitutes.

The first argument is obvious enough: if things are as bad among black people as everyone suggests, then the liberal social welfare policies of the Sixties and Seventies have not delivered on their promises. President Reagan's budget-makers argue that it makes no sense to send huge new amounts of government money down the same dead-end road of social failure that has already swallowed up immense expenditures in the past. Those who argue that we have not spent enough may have a case, but they should first look at the figures. In 1964, the federal government spent $34 billion on human resources programs (education, health, income security, nutrition, public assistance, etc.), a figure that amounted to just short of 29 per cent of the budget. By 1981, the dollar figure had risen tenfold to $349 billion, and, even more striking, that figure now represented over 53 per cent of the total budget. (The Reagan projections in social welfare spending, by the way, would reduce that portion of the budget by just 1.5 per cent over the course of several years.)

Not all that money goes to the poor, of course, and by no means all or most of the poor are black, but given the record, conservatives might be forgiven their skepticism concerning liberal arguments that identify the well-being of black Americans with ever larger and more expensive federal programs. If so much money has brought such ambiguous results in the past, what reason have we for supposing that major new expenditures will bring significant improvement? Conservatives are often too glib in their argument that problems cannot be solved simply by throwing money at them, but it seems clear that in the case of the difficultues of the urban black community, they have at least something of a point. Welfare, for example, has been and remains an essential life-saver for many black families (a point conservatives often overlook), but social critics from all over the political spectrum have noted its tendency to promote such social ills as dependency and family disintegration.

The Reagan Administration contends that its emphasis on cutting the rate of inflation and on rejuvenating the economy through its taxing and spending policies will do more for black people—and for all other Americans—than any combination of government programs could hope to do. (The Administration charges, with some justification, that liberals have tended to ignore the social costs of inflation and to disregard the role of social welfare spending in spurring inflation.) President Reagan has in effect adopted John Kennedy's maxim that a rising tide lifts all boats. Poverty, he argues, is best fought by a generally buoyant economy (with the buoyancy provided by supply-side incentives) rather than by specifically-targeted federal programs. One can find economists and economic theories on either side of this argument, and it is one of those matters best resolved in practice rather than in theoretical dispute, especially since both sides to the dispute often seem as driven by ideological commitment as by empirical analysis. It would seem that the debate over supply-side economics and its attendant doctrines has been conducted entirely too much as an exercise in quasi-theological dogmatics. Economics should be approached as a pragmatic science, not as a moral battlefield or an object of faith.

The President and his advisors may well be right on the major issues, and if they can manage to get the economy moving again while simultaneously limiting inflation, they will indeed have accomplished more for black people than any programmatic war on poverty could be expected to do. But if they are wrong, urban blacks and other poor people—all those who have been most affected by the cutbacks in social spending—will have carried a cruelly disproportionate share of a losing enterprise.

And even if they are right, the Reaganites often seem not to understand that even the most healthy economy will include in it people who, on either a short or long term basis, cannot make it entirely on their own. It is true that a number of Great Society programs intended to benefit the less fortunate worked badly or not at all, but a number of others did work, and even many of those that did not need to be reconceived and revitalized rather than simply scrapped. We need a good deal more pluralism and private sector involvement in our human resources programs, but many of those programs remain necessary in some form, and they cannot all simply be dumped into the hands of sweet charity. A careful scrutiny of the President's budget cuts indicates that the assault on social welfare programs is not as all-encompassing as partisan rhetoric sometimes suggests, but extreme care must be taken in seeing to it that in the Administration's program taken whole (social welfare policies plus overall effects of monetary and fiscal policy), the poor, black and white alike, not wind up as net losers.

On two other issues in dispute between civil rights leaders and the Administration—busing and quotas—we think the Administration is clearly in the right. History may well record that the worst error the modern civil rights movement (the NAACP in particular) ever made was to invest so much of its time, energy, and moral fervor in such a dubious cause as school busing. The attempt to require racial balance in the schools (busing may originally have been intended as a means to end segregation, but it quickly became an instrument of forced integration) lacked either a mass constituency or a plausible rationale. Most parents, black and white,

As sophisticated political strategists, most civil rights leaders understand that achievement of the things they want will depend on forging alliances with sympathetic non-black groups.

were reluctant to send their children out of their neighborhoods to attend distant schools, especially when those schools were perceived, often correctly, as educationally inferior or even physically dangerous. Those who favored busing were seldom those whose own children were involved.

No one ever explained why racial balance was necessary to achieve decent education for black children, and the apparent assumption that those children could only learn effectively in the presence of some critical mass of white children understandably struck many blacks as condescending at best. Busing wasted money that would better have been spent in classrooms; it created unnecessary racial and class divisions; and, after all that, it wound up failing anyway: one school system after another on which busing was imposed resegregated itself through white flight. The current Congressional attempt to legislate the end of court-ordered busing is constitutionally irresponsible, but the blame for it rests as much on an arbitrary and absolutist judiciary as on opportunistic politicians. Well-intentioned people supported busing because it seemed a symbol of a noble end; seldom has the price of symbolic politics been so high.

To treat the issue of quotas satisfactorily would require more space than is here available. Our brief treatment must begin with precise definition: affirmative action need not, though in practice it often does, imply a system of quotas. No one can reasonably object to efforts to seek out qualified members of minority groups for educational or occupational advancement, nor is it wrong that disadvantaged minorities be offered special training or remedial opportunities to improve their levels of qualification. But when affirmative action shades into quotas, when efforts to make equality of opportunity more meaningful get transformed into demands for mandated equality of condition, then legitimate objections arise.

Quota systems *do* require reverse discrimination, as the *Bakke* case clearly demonstrated, and those thus discriminated against are in many cases themselves members of ethnic groups that can in no reasonable way be classified among the privileged classes in America. The idea that advancement in our society should come without regard to attributes of ancestry, class, or religion stands at the very heart of the American idea, and attempts to remedy prior violations of that ideal through a system of group rights that imposes new modes of discrimination while it subverts the ideal itself make no moral sense. Acts of racial discrimination require compensation, but the basis for judgment in such cases should, in equity, be specific and individual, and not simply a mark of color. Quotas often work in favor of those in minority groups least likely to have been victims of educational or occupational discrimination. Black applicants to law and medical schools, after all, like their white counterparts, tend to come from the middle class, not from depressed urban slums.

What all these controversies between the Reagan Administration and its civil rights critics add up to, we think, is a considerable amount of genuine disagreement compounded by significant doses of misunderstanding and mutual incomprehension. (We pass over here the matter of the tax-exempt status of schools that practice some form of discrimination. The Administration handled this very badly, but since it has introduced legislation to forbid in law the tax benefits formerly denied by IRS regulation, there seems to be no substantial point of disagreement.) Whatever side one takes on these particular issues, there remain the larger questions of where the civil rights movement goes from here and what political strategies it follows in getting where it wants to go.

It strikes us as a positive development that advocates of black power appear less dominant in the black community than they once were. The point, of course, is not that blacks should hesitate to mobilize the same forms of political and economic influence that other groups have put together to ease—or force—their way into the American mainstream. But black power as interpreted by, say, a Stokely Carmichael seemed a call for separate development that, however romantically attractive as a manifesto of independence, could only be ultimately self-defeating in a society that is almost 90 per cent non-black. Images of "black power" or "white power" polarize the society dangerously; they are also false in their suggestions of monolithically-opposed entities. There is no "white power" in America because no cohesive white community exists.

As sophisticated political strategists, most civil rights leaders understand that achievement of the things they want will depend on forging alliances with sympathetic non-black groups. That is the beginning of political wisdom, but it may be that the kinds of coalitions envisioned fail to cover the full range of interests and situations represented in the black community. When civil rights leaders speak of alliances with other groups, they tend to do so in terms only of left-wing class politics.

In its extreme form, such talk employs images of social transformation and of a whole new order of things. A typical recent proposal imagined a political program based on massive new government anti-poverty programs, solidarity with Third World liberation movements, and development at local levels of alternatives to capitalism. However one reacts personally to such a vision, it is clear that it is not one likely to have wide

appeal for the American public, and coalitions based upon it will have little prospect of political success. Even more moderate versions of this brand of politics tend to frame their programs along lines that exclude middle-class concerns (inflation, crime, social instability) and that restrict their constituency entirely to the poor, the unemployed, and other social victims.

To some extent, of course, this is inevitable. Given the concentration of so many blacks at the bottom of the socioeconomic structure, any political program put together by black organizations that ignored the concerns of the disadvantaged would be both unrealistic and morally culpable. Yet two matters need always to be kept in mind in this regard. First, as we have already noted, it is not necessarily true that government social welfare programs provide the only or even the best route to economic improvement for the poor. (New Deal social programs put a floor on the sufferings of the working class during the Depression, but they were not the engine of the postwar prosperity that lifted the working class to comparative affluence.) And that matter quite aside, it is simply inaccurate to assume, as so much of the civil rights movement's rhetoric tends to do, that all black people are poor and dependent.

There is now a large black middle class composed of millions of people whose problems and possibilities can no longer be defined within the old categories of poverty, oppression, and powerlessness. The black community is not a monolith, and it seems politically self-defeating for it to act as if it were. Is it not possible for civil rights organizations to maintain their commitment to those within the black community who have not made it and yet begin to address themselves as well to the concerns of those who have? America is predominantly a middle-class society, and any political or social movement that does not recognize that—and act accordingly—will condemn itself to ultimate futility.

Not all black people are social victims, and a truly comprehensive black politics will have to go beyond the assumptions and stances that the theory of victimization imposes. Our history demonstrates, as in the case of Jews and Orientals, that there is room in the interstices of American society for oppressed minority groups to make a place for themselves and begin the long ascent out of their oppressed status. Black Americans, who have suffered quantitatively and qualitatively as no other group has, have nonetheless begun that ascent, and it is time more notice were taken of that by black and white alike.

To move out of victim status is to get beyond the mood and rhetoric of hopelessness, resentment, and comfortable (but ineffectual) moralism that can keep individuals and groups trapped in their own sense of futility. It may provide psychological comfort to dwell on charges of "racism" or "social meanness," but it would not seem to be very socially useful. (The once-searing term "racist" has been so cheapened by casual and inappropriate use that it has almost entirely lost its capacity to shock, outrage, or shame.) Only a fool would deny that prejudice still exists and still inflicts social and economic damage, but it is not the all-devouring monster it once was, and it no longer has the power it formerly had to condemn virtually all blacks to lives devoid of broad social decency.

Black people today hold more of their fate in their own hands than ever before, which makes it appropriate for such black social critics as the brilliant economist Thomas Sowell to emphasize internal elements of black culture, rather than external elements of white attitudes, in assessing the condition of the black community today. When Sowell and others include matters of family instability, social indiscipline, and educational unpreparedness in accounting for the economic plight of poor blacks, they are not involved, as is so often charged, in a process of "blaming the victim." They are rather attempting a realistic analysis of those elements within the black community itself that contribute to the agonies it endures. (Those who would dismiss Sowell as an unrepresentative conservative might note that the Reverend Jesse Jackson of PUSH, whom no one has accused of conservative leanings, has been saying many of the same things Sowell does for some time now.)

It is time our discussion of racial matters got beyond certain taboos or habits of self-censorship. Those who insist, for example, on identifying concern over the crime rate in the black community as a cover ("code word") for racism inhibit necessary conversation on a critical issue. Black crime hurts blacks more than it does whites, since more of it is visited on blacks, but it is a matter of general community concern not only in itself, but also for its poisonous contribution to racial antagonisms. It is not too much to say that the major feeling most whites have toward blacks today, especially young male urban blacks, is not hatred or indifference, but fear. That fear, and what it does to our racial attitudes, needs to be talked about much more openly than it now is.

But it is not, in the end, with the feelings or fears of whites that discussion of civil rights issues should preoccupy itself. It is rather with black people themselves, what they want, and how they might, with the help of the rest of us, go about getting it. And that means talking about the political economy and how it really works, and how the concerns and programs of the old liberalism might be blended with certain new, possibly even conservative, remedies to create, not the racial paradise that it makes no sense yet to dream of, but a livable and decent society.

The Quest for Quality

A Christian Approach to the Liberal Arts

Larry J. Alderink

Can any praise be worthy of the Lord's majesty? How magnificent his strength! How inscrutable his wisdom! Humans are your creatures, Lord, and their instinct is to praise you. They bear about themselves the mark of death, the sign of their own sin, to remind them that you thwart the proud. But still, since they are part of your creation, they wish to praise you. The thought of you stirs them so deeply that they cannot be content unless they praise you, because you made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you.

St. Augustine

You could attach prices to thoughts. Some cost a lot, some a little. And how does one pay for thoughts? The answer, I think, is: with courage.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

In this paper I want to ask: What draws us to engage in liberal arts, and to do that to the best of our ability? What propels us to commit ourselves to liberal arts and to commit ourselves with thoughtfulness and vitality? I will first indicate some possible reasons for seeking knowledge, next venture a suggestion regarding the character of knowledge, then consider a way of connecting knowledge and action, and finally propose a way of thinking about criteria against which quality or degrees of it can be measured.

In order to get started, we may assume a tentative definition of quality to guide us: quality is what is done with what is available, with regard to certain standards. After all, we ought to pursue quality. We who study here should strive for excellence. What do we say to those who join us? One thing we say is that knowledge is worth seeking and worth having.

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I. THE USES OF KNOWLEDGE

Thesis #1: that knowledge is not only an end in itself, but also serves an end beyond itself.

The many disciplines converge on at least one common concern: knowledge. The search for knowledge is appropriate to our species. The asking of questions, the search for our ignorance, and the thirst for knowledge are good for us. If knowledge is worth having, searching for it is worth the effort. Indeed, we find joy in making up hypotheses, selecting data, constructing facts, construing evidence, weighing various theories, disagreeing with some scholars and agreeing with others, mustering the courage to invite critiques from fellow students and seeking to be shown our mistakes, going back over the same terrain again and then a third time from still another angle.

Perhaps we engage in academic pursuits and even play with abandon because it is so deeply rewarding and because we create. Beyond the *transmission* of knowledge lies the *creating* of knowledge, and here failure is as pleasurable as success. Making no mistakes may be a sign of lethargy; making mistakes provides the possibility for correction and gives signs of energy and vitality.

Why spend four years and more in the pursuit of knowledge? Because it serves a purpose, one might say. One purpose knowledge serves is itself. The most *traditional* purpose of the disciplines is to extend knowledge. Another site may be teased to yield its secrets to the archaeologists. A new text may add to our knowledge of history and of literature. A new idea may shed light on old ideas. A new technique may make possible the discovery of previously unknown facts and make viable the transformation of speculations into conclusions. The extension of knowledge often pushes us to explore the boundaries of our ideas.

A second reason for seeking knowledge is *disciplinary.* When we use a hypothesis to guide research and to stimulate thinking, or when we test the limits of a theory or even a paradigm, we are seeking more than information. The general rule of empiricism—that facts or experience measure the success or failure of our theories, and that agreement between a hypothesis and data inclines us to accept the hypothesis (whereas disagreement inclines us to reject it)—is called into question because evidence which might disconfirm a hypothesis often can be created only by raising an alternative and

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incompatible hypothesis. Frequently we can learn the features of an idea by contrasting two or more ideas rather than by using the idea to interpret phenomena.

A further reason to entertain incompatible and conflicting theories is that there are few if any theories which comport perfectly with all known facts the theories purport to explain. Consequently, the task of learning cannot be merely—if at all— to systematize findings or to organize predictions. Rather, the task of learners is to compete with each other in order that both the weaker and the stronger case may be heard. Such clashes and competition mean that both internal and external criticism move learners beyond acquiring information and dividing into schools of opinion; even gathering information is an activity contaminated by theory and even by interest.

Occasionally a whole body of theories is called into question. Sometimes centers do not hold and things fall apart. Those are exciting times, for we catch a glimpse of a third reason for seeking knowledge: *ideological.* Normally we are trained in disciplines by learning to ask particular questions in particular ways. Progress is made by asking conventional questions because we have conventional questions to ask. Without conventions, standards could not exist, and a scholar in one city could not understand a paper by another scholar in a different city. But when fundamental questions—those lying at the bottom of a discipline or a group of disciplines—are changed, a radical change is under way.

Here a basic shift occurs: conventional or normal questions and procedures no longer produce results because the conditions which make them fruitful and productive have changed. What was once normal or paradigmatic becomes antiquarian (unless someone revives it). Usually such a basic shift happens when one of two conditions obtain: when new discoveries occur so rapidly that an existing set of theories cannot account for them, or when a discipline calcifies because its postulates are incapable of extension or development.

Such times of crisis permit us to see that the pursuit of knowledge is not an end in itself. Nor do inquirers give up on knowledge when they find their perspectives undergoing radical change; they become excited anew and scurry to learn new ways to learn. Having *and* undermining conventions feeds into the ideological use of knowledge. We come to think about thinking.

By "ideological use of knowledge" I mean that knowledge is used to serve the purposes and interests of a class or a group. I also mean to say that purpose and interest are always involved in seeking knowledge, although this use may be concealed from time to time and in one way or another. There is, of course, a wide range in interests and groups. One class might be the working class which, by uniting would have nothing to lose but its chains. Another might be capitalists who by diversifying and internationalizing would be able to perpetuate their hold on markets and means of production. In any case, a school such as Concordia claims its own ideological interest (indeed, proclaims it!):

> The purpose of Concordia College is to influence the affairs of the world by sending into society thoughtful and informed men and women dedicated to the Christian life.

If it is the case that knowledge does serve the interests of a group or a class, and if Concordia College explicitly announces that ideological purpose, one well may wonder about the connection between knowledge and interest, between knowledge and the purposes it serves. We may even ask what knowledge *is*.

II. THE CHARACTER OF KNOWLEDGE

Thesis #2: that knowledge is not defined by some universal standard and does not have a perspective-invariant meaning, but is determined by the perspective in which it is embedded and the ideological purpose it intends to serve.

Of course knowledge is not some free-floating entity, self-contained and absolute, which is there for us to grab and to ingest. Before having knowledge or talking about it, we must create it since it isn't there for the plucking like apples on a tree. Knowledge is something knowers have. Knowledge is something selves have, and before having it, create it. One might expect that since there are different views of what selves are, each view of selves would include its own account of knowers and knowledge.

If it is the case that "knowledge" is not to be given a perspective-invariant meaning, and if the meaning of "knowledge" is related to a view of human selfhood and particularly self-as-knower, it behooves us to consider what may be a useful and valuable construct of the two. On the one hand, one might hold that the root of many if not most of the problems in human life can be traced to our lack of knowledge. Where ignorance is considered to be our problem, knowledge is rightly held to be the solution. On this view, we ought to have great faith in reason for it will further the march from superstition to enlightenment, from bondage to nature to harnessing nature's forces for human good, from enslavement to liberation. On this view, education is redemptive, if not redemption itself!

On the other hand, one might think it important to mine the Christian tradition for another starting point. At the core of the Christian tradition lies the claim that human beings are related to God—and that this relation has embedded in it certain responsibilities and obligations. The claim is that we humans are so constituted as

Humans prefer themselves as their own norm. Unfortunately reason does not escape the Fall; something of reason is lost or battered, for it as well as other human traits is rendered defective.

to bear certain duties. We are responsible to God for acting in ways appropriate for humans to act with regard to their Creator. To the Creator for creation we are in duty bound to thank, praise, serve, and obey God.

From this primary responsibility is derived the belief that we have two further responsibilities. We are responsible to our fellow humans to act with regard to each other's potential (i.e., not to squander the best in us or to betray our capabilities, but to strive for human fulfillment; not to seek domination of one group or gender over another, but to strive for liberation of us all). We are responsible to nature for acting in ways appropriate for humans to act with regard to the world around us as custodians and stewards.

One Christian tradition calls these responsibilities a "cultural mandate." Another tradition speaks of vocation and includes economic and political orders as well as the ecclesiastical order. The goal is to exercise vocation or calling *whatever* the station may be in the orders of creation, the interconnected and interdependent patterns, which are the world. In both cases, the distinction between sacred and secular realms of life tends to be obliterated. The task which comes with being born human, then, is the task to engage in cultural activity: to make the world a habitation fit for human living, to humanize the world, to make the world a home.

Frequently this task and these responsibilities are called the "image of God": only human beings bear a creative resemblance to their Creator, and only human beings have the capacity to create as their Creator created them, and thus reflect their Creator's likeness. What else could be the norm for being human: called to obey and to love the rules which specify our responsibilities to God—the very responsibilities which reveal our creaturely character, the very rules which are neither imposed on us by a dictatorial deity nor yet alien to our deepest nature? Where else could we look for enjoyment but to the discharging of our responsibilities to God-in-the-world, with our fellow humans? As earthlings, as brothers and sisters to the beasts and birds, we yet reflect the Creator of all reality. On this view, cultural activity is neither redemptive nor casual; learning and knowledge belong to us merely because we are created.

Beyond creation, Christians hold, lies a Fall. Regrettably and unfortunately, and in freedom and knowledge, human beings lose their grip on their status. At the same time that we lose hold of God, we lose hold on ourselves; in becoming alien to God, we become alien to ourselves and to each other; in missing what we are aimed at, we come also to dislike and even to despise our fellow creatures, the birds of the air and the beasts of the field and the fields themselves. All manner of evil is unleashed, some of which is visible even today. Rather than trustful obedience, rebellion against responsibilities become characteristic; mutilation rather than stewardship for nature, domination and victimization rather than human development for ourselves, and surrogate gods rather than creative reflection of the true God.

Humans prefer themselves as their own norm. Unfortunately reason does not escape the Fall; something of reason is lost or battered, for it as well as other human traits is rendered defective. Reason and the knowledge it produces are as likely to produce contaminated fallout as they are to produce healing. It is not so much that reason remains the one trustworthy faculty and the hope for our salvation, but that we are subject to bondage and that our wills are subjugated to all sorts of false gods and self-destructive impulses. Reason is hardly the agent of redemption. Education will not save us.

In addition to Creation and Fall, there is a third dimension Christians find in their store of theoretical or interpretive terms. Since God is determined not to allow creatures to have the last word and because God resolves to restore humans to their proper estate, acts of renewal become visible to those with eyes to see. The most striking and blatant activity of God in working toward human renewal, Christians hold, is found in Jesus Christ. Two features stand out. First is the faith of Jesus: trust in God without an eye for any benefits which might accrue or another eye for what to do if things take a turn for the worse or actually turn out bad. Second is the love of Jesus: a love which is neither self-aggrandizing nor self-denying but which heals and builds, renews and restores.

Thus faith and love become absolute or presuppositional values: they are not built upon facts or events, and consequently cannot be destroyed by appeals to facts or events. Belief in the goodness of God is not inferred from events or evidence, but is an assumption brought to events and evidence. Although one may be hard-pressed to give reasons *for* these values, these values *are* reasons for doing other things. That is to say, faith and love are themselves reasons for striving to be of service. Therein lies our *summum bonum*: human well-being (*eudaimonia*) is to be of service in the cause of human renewal.

Although what I have written in this section may seem sermonic to some and old hat to others, it is my intent to derive from the Christian triadic structure of Creation-Fall-Redemption certain implications regarding knowledge, education, and a motivation towards quality. The implications, as I see them, are:

1. that reason is neither the lord nor master of our being. Nor is knowledge the solution to the ills which plague our situation as humans. Consequent-

ly, education is not in and of itself redemptive. Because of our fallen condition reason itself stands in need of redemption, both in its operations and in its purposes.

2. that faith is neither the lord nor master of our being. "Having faith" does not provide the solution to moral, social, political, or scientific dilemmas. Frequently, faith is understood to be believing that God has saved one's soul for eternal salvation, with the consequence that only faith should provide answers for worldly affairs, or that one's life-in-the-world is largely a matter of indifference. Such a notion of faith severs faith from the activity of created beings which is the focus of divine redemption, and makes salvation exclusively an other-worldly matter.

3. that Creation and Redemption focus essentially on the world as we know it, on the world in which we live. The created world is the world God made and the redeemed world is the world God redeems. Although Redemption includes more than this world, it certainly involves a view of restoring the world to the intentions God had in creating it and of recovering what was lost or rendered defective by the Fall.

4. that scholarship and education have to do with the object of Creation and Redemption: the world. To subordinate Creation to Redemption would result in holding that Christians have more skill or intelligence or some other advantage which non-Christians lack, with the consequence that Christian scholarship and education are by virtue of being Christian superior to other forms of scholarship and education. In distinction, because scholars and learners from a wide spectrum of perspectives seek to understand and interpret and order the creation, it is the quality and persuasiveness of reasons, arguments, interpretations, theories, and constructs which must compete with each other. In other words, the academic disciplines have to do with the first article of the Creed; for Christians, the activities are influenced by the second article of the Creed in an explicit and acknowledged fashion.

5. that there is an ultimate good, a *summum bonum* which human beings typically seek. Clearly, a general order of things or a cosmic pattern which beckons us to pursue certain ends cannot be some merely external order; were it merely external, we could neither know it nor seek it. Nor could such a general order be imposed on us by some being external to us; were that the case, whatever claimed to be our *highest good* couldn't be *our* highest good. Hence, our highest good and a general meaning of things must be found, if it is to be found at all, in what humans typically and characteristically seek and do. To begin with what is characteristically sought in particular situations does not exclude what is general or universal; indeed, what is typically sought suggests a general seeking. This, I hold, is what Christianity designates service to God whose particular term is the renewal of human life and the liberation of human beings from the enslavement in which they exist.

III. KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION

Thesis #3: that knowledge is related to action by way of world-making or enterprise or work.

To this point I have tried to indicate a source to which some educators can turn for an answer to the question: what do we have to work with? That source, I think, is found in the Creation-Fall-Redemption view of human existence. That, as I suggested, helps us partially answer the question of quality in education. We should now venture an answer to a second question: what to do?

Obviously, human beings in general and students or learners in particular do all sorts of things. But if we begin with the assumption that our doing has a *telos* or a goal, we may inquire into certain tendencies or dispositions which are fit for the *telos.* And if we assume a coherence between a *telos* and our well-being or *eudaimonia,* we may ask about those tendencies or dispositions which conduce towards the goal.

Developing tendencies is clearly instrumental to acting in responsible ways. Truth-seeking and truth-telling, justice, courage, creativity, curiosity, reflection, all these qualities and many others are instrumental to and indeed produce the goal of well-being. Conversely, lying, theft, betrayal, and other similar qualities detract from well-being, even though they may bring pleasure or wealth or fame. But the virtuous tendencies and the vicious tendencies are not only instrumental; a life characterized by virtuous tendencies is inherently worth living, whereas a life marked by vicious tendencies is the worst life conceivable or possible.

One might speak of the soul or personhood to identify those features which make one most truly oneself. We might picture human souls or persons as twisted and crooked by their habits and pursuits, or, alternately, as happy and joyful in living well. Here we have a kind of self-reflection on what matters most to people, on the center from which people live and act. The self-knowledge produced by such reflection constitutes knowing

It has long been argued by critics that religion is a disease of language, a disease which prompts people to say what cannot be said or to utter the unutterable.

who one is and being true to oneself, and taking responsibility for one's most fundamental beliefs; at the opposite of self-knowledge stands ignorance, or not knowing what is second-hand and bogus and shallow in oneself.

Frequently such a picture is thought to be subjective. Is the picture—including the values, beliefs, dispositions, and behavior which are features of the picture—a matter of choice, in which case it cannot be thought to be true or false, good or bad, or anything in between? Is the picture a matter of feeling or taste, in which case one reaches bottom when one says, "That's the way I feel, and that's that"?

It is frequently held, on the other hand, that there are some areas of life which are not matters of choice or feeling. These areas are those where science yields knowledge. Here the self isn't the proper object of knowledge; the world is. Here the proper procedure is not self-reflection and the yield self-knowledge; the proper procedure consists of techniques which can be used by other researchers and experiments which can be repeated by others to obtain the same results.

So we often conclude that self-knowledge is personal and subjective, whereas world-knowledge is impersonal and objective. By and large, the humanities deal with humans and the sciences with the world and observable behavior of objects of the world. Somehow, on this view, humans are more apart from the world than they are a part of it—rather like lords and ladies who divide among themselves their respective tasks.

A view common in our century is that a wide gap does exist between subjective and objective, between human and non-human, between humanities and sciences. One famous author has even written of "two cultures" and a growing rift between them. A clear expression of such a view is found in Freudian psychology, to which we owe one of the most pervasive images of what it means to be human beings. It would seem, from this perspective, that humans are divided into two parts and inhabit two worlds. During the day we live in a real world where laws of motion are regularly followed, where wishes must be harnessed for the purposes of civilization, where the laws of life and death are inexorable. But at night we enter another world in which our wishes enable us to travel to distant continents without so much as packing a suitcase or purchasing a plane ticket, in which dead people can return to us for visits, and undesired events can be willed away.

On this view, our scientific beliefs and values entitle us to view with superiority people from other times and places. Science has replaced religion as a way of explaining the world; if religion is to survive in the modern world, it must focus on ethics, aesthetics, or psychology (having nothing worth saying about the world) or be relegated to the subjective realm of feeling—feeling that life is worth living, that we can love one another and nature (but such love having no relation to knowing).

At the beginning of our century, Friedrich Max-Müller said that religion is a disease of language, a disease which prompts people to say what cannot be said or to utter the unutterable. Thus, if we relegate religion to ethics or aesthetics, and independently of either use science to understand the progress we've made in the long history from savagery and barbarism to civilization, we can see the move from superstition to enlightenment and irrationality to reasonableness.

This two-world picture exerts a powerful hold on us. Yet dividing the world into reality and illusion, day and night, objective and subjective is highly questionable. In a number of disciplines, that image is being subjected to severe criticism. In the physical sciences, I understand, it is held that observers influence what they observe and observations disturb what is observed (an observed system is a disturbed system). In the social sciences, the point is more clear if not always recognized. Similarly in some art and poetry, artists do not go off on some wild ego expression, but rather express themselves as portraying their vision of the world. In literary criticism, deconstructionism is one of the more puzzling and exciting winds to blow from France, and in philosophy, I understand there is a movement called anti-foundationalism, whose goal is to show that the mind is not some faculty by which we obtain indubitable knowledge about the external world and that no science has a privileged foundation which serves as a basis for a unique, essential, and true grasp of reality. In religious studies it has been known for some time that presuppositions inevitably influence scholarly conclusions and that fundamental convictions shape facts which are chosen and evidence which is created and conclusions which are drawn.

However that may be, it is clear to me that two theological principles we have considered call into question the split into two worlds and suggest a different starting point. First, from the belief that God creates us in such a way that we reflect traits of the deity, it follows that we are creative. There is no obvious reason to think that we are creative in science and during the day in the real world, but imaginative in humanities and in our dreams in an illusory world.

Second, from the identification of service to God in the cause of human renewal as our *summum bonum*, it follows that whatever we do, poetry as well as science, can fall within the scope of service. There is no obvious reason further to divide service into real and illusory; there is good reason to think that there are many ways the goal of human renewal can be achieved.

The point is not to strive for objectivity in the sense of value-free inquiry, and even less to think of education as encouraging students to set aside their values when they think.

If we think of human beings as reflecting their Creator, we come to think of human beings as actors or doers, and in acting and doing they create. World-making is seen as one of our chief activities. On this view, the world is both given and possible; possible, that is, to be made and remade in different ways. When we awaken on a given morning, we don't leave one world and enter another. What confronts us is what we made the day before, and some of it is worth continuing as we project a future, but some of it is rubbish we should clear away because it isn't worth keeping and using for the future. It isn't helpful, then, to think in terms of subjective vs. objective or reality vs. illusion or even humanities vs. science. It is more helpful to think in terms of making and creating. When the world is to be made and remade, we are driven to ask evaluative questions: what is worth discarding? what is worth retaining? what is worth projecting into the future?

The point, then, is not to strive for objectivity in the sense of value-free inquiry, and even less to think of education as encouraging students to set aside their values when they think. The point is, however, to strive for objectivity in the sense that competing viewpoints, alternative hypotheses, and disconfirming data be entertained and even sought. Further, rational activity can lead to illusions as well as models, and dreams and even hunches and free association can lead to models as well as illusions.

Perhaps we shouldn't consider reason as the arbiter of claims to knowledge, or theology as a cultural overseer, or philosophy as keeping all the other disciplines honest by informing them of properly grounded and unproperly grounded claims to knowledge. Perhaps we shouldn't think of reason as a mirror reflecting the grime and confusions of experience, but itself a clear master of truth and falsity, of meaning and purpose. Perhaps we should think of humans as makers and creators reflecting their Creator's nature and using all their capacities.

Lived experience and formal analysis go together, and reason is one aspect of the process. This is the starting point of creative work in any area—academic or non-academic—although the products of the work vary significantly. Yet in art or science, religion or history, the focus is on creating. In an educational institution, this means something considerably more than *transmitting* knowledge. It means *creating* knowledge. It means considerably more than the *consuming* of knowledge; it means *producing* knowledge. Were transmitting knowledge the core of teaching and learning, a one-way street would be the ideal: from teacher to student, the teacher giving and the student receiving. The receivers are asked to engage in a passive activity, but the teachers are somehow beyond that, occupying like Olympians a position of superiority. Here the givers are in a moral bind, that of asking their students to do something they themselves find unnecessary or refuse to do: learn.

But if both students and teachers are engaged in the same process of learning, both are active in the same process and in the same pursuit: desiring and striving for what is beyond both, viz., knowledge. On this view, it is not so much wonder as *eros* which propels toward knowledge; it is also *eros* which moves us to renounce the superiority which comes with the assumption of possessing knowledge and to assert the need to search for knowledge.

Clearly there is no reason to hide our ignorance as we engage in the search for knowledge and truth. Indeed, our ignorance is both the starting point and the spur which drives us to knowledge. Nor is there any reason to assume that we do our work without assumptions. Indeed, the recognition of our assumptions liberates us to attend to the tasks set before us. On this view, our assumptions as Christians and as scholars are not to be repressed or eliminated, but rather given room to make their operations effective.

IV. STANDARDS FOR QUALITY

Thesis #4: that standards of quality are derived from disciplinary work rather than from Christianity or Christian theology.

With the religious principle of Creation-Fall-Redemption I have tried to answer two questions. What do we have or what is available? Not, I suggest, ignorant (i.e., non-knowing) human beings who require knowledge for their redemption, but created and fallen and redeemed beings for whom the bondage-freedom or servility-freedom dialectic is definitive or constitutive. What do we do? Not, I suggest, strive for self-actualization or to be good members of society, but develop certain tendencies and discharge our responsibilities, and therein find our enjoyment and full stature as human beings. Not, I suggest by dividing our experience and world into reality and illusion and the disciplines into sciences and humanities, but by education toward the renewal of life and the remaking of the world.

I have argued that we as learners ought to hold certain beliefs or ideas as assumptions, and that we should foster and develop these ideas in our learning—or that all learners ought to nurture the ideas and develop them in our studies. I have also argued that we should act on the basis of these assumptions or presuppositions —specifically as learners, we ought in disciplinary and interdisciplinary activities to create, to construct ideas and to make theories, to create knowledge to serve the purpose of renewing human life and remaking the

In fundamentalist circles, a stock storehouse of rigidly held theological views, supposedly derived from the Bible, determines educational standards for virtually all fields of inquiry.

world.

Since all ideas and acts are not of equal worth (except to some liberals), and since hardly anyone would hold that anything goes, how would we know whether we are doing a mediocre, good, or excellent job? Since it makes little sense to hold that doing one's own thing is what matters, and since thinking that feeling good about whatever we're doing signifies poverty-stricken standards or the absence of standards, we come to ask how we can dispatch our responsibilities and fulfill our duties, and in doing so find enjoyment and render gratitude for our lives. In brief: by what standards do we measure the quality of our efforts as learners?

A fairly common procedure is to derive standards for quality from Christianity or Christian theology. In fundamentalist circles, the enterprise is usually rather vulgar but straightforward. A stock storehouse of rigidly held theological views, supposedly derived from the Bible, determines the conclusions that evolution is wrong (or "only a theory"), that Freud, Marx, and Shakespeare have little worthwhile to say and thus needn't be read, that moral inquiry is already a sign of moral laxity, and that scholarly investigation of Scripture is to question the answers.

There are, in distinction, sophisticated and serious efforts to develop a radically different view of theology —theology as queen of the sciences. Here all or many of the disciplines are arrayed around theology as the center, source, and goal of knowledge. Here theology is not *one* of the disciplines next to other disciplines, but the fundamental and foundational discipline.

I will not argue against either of these two views—but only say that the anti-intellectualism of fundamentalism is incompatible with academic life and that queens may easily become figureheads or worse. Let me propose an alternative to both these views.

If standards for quality or criteria for excellence are not to be derived from theology, where can we look? I suggest that we look to the disciplines: the assumptions which found them, the procedures by which they validate and invalidate hypotheses, the methods by which results are obtained, the control beliefs which prompt acceptance or rejection or modification of theories and direct the construction of new theories, and the goals toward which knowledge is aimed.

It is tempting to think that it would be nice if the state of the disciplines and the relations among them were coherent and if the students in the disciplines conducted their activities with the effortless grace and poise of an Oxford don. It is tempting to think that it would be nice if scholars could start anew, presuppose little or nothing, or begin afresh with only that which is self-evident—and with a clear method reach true and certain conclusions.

But even a glance at one's own discipline, let alone others' disciplines, moves one to conclude that things are in a state of disunity and disarray. Little unity of knowledge, little methodological agreement regarding description or explanation, little harmony regarding goals and uses of knowledge is apparent. This is not, however, the deplorable situation we might initially think it to be.

Although learning lacks an absolute starting point, there may be something valuable which comes with construing the effort to get started as a dilemma. Knowledge *is* impossible if it means searching for what is either known or unknown; in the first case, there is no reason to search because one knows already, and in the second case, there is no possibility of searching because one wouldn't know what to search for in the first place. *Degrees* of knowledge, however, *are* possible when the dilemma of ignorance-knowledge is replaced with the continuum of opinion-knowledge, where skepticism is never total nor certainty attainable and beyond doubt. That's the way it appears to be in the current state of the disciplines: disunity is a sign of being *in medias res.* It is precisely the lack of indubitable starting points and fixed and certain conclusions that maintains movement in the disciplines—and makes work in at least one of them exciting.

On the view I am urging, no one discipline occupies a privileged sanctuary. Rather, the disciplines are aspectual or modal, that is, each discipline abstracts from the givenness of the actual world one or another aspect for focused attention. The particular aspect or mode which becomes the focus for attention does not *define* the discipline, however, as though one and only one discipline can inquire into a particular domain, from which other disciplines are prohibited from entering by intellectual no-trespassing signs. Were we to think that an aspect or sphere of the actual world constitutes a discipline, then philosophers could not inquire into social issues, sociologists could not read Plato's *Republic* or Aristotle's *politics,* theologians could not study Shakespeare, and literary critics could not examine the Bible.

What *does* distinguish the disciplines is the methodological pluralism or variety which characterizes them. Thus we find the boundaries which distinguish one territory from another: not *what* is studied but *how* study is conducted. The test question, then, to ask of any discipline is whether it is fruitful or whether it is unproductive when moved out of its home base. Hence the use of literary methods of analysis is to be encouraged in Biblical studies, and perhaps even some religious ideas might be useful in trying to understand why someone might have most need of blessing but find "Amen" stuck in his throat. In some situations the old battle of science and religion is a sham contest between confused oppo-

We should expect of theories or ideas at least that their terms be coherent and consistent, for otherwise anomalies are generated which vitiate the explanatory power we seek.

nents; where fundamentalisms of either the theological or scientific variety match swords, both sides receive nicks, but the audience soon goes on to more interesting contests. In other situations, the antagonism between science and theology is reduced or eliminated because the methodological boundaries between the two render unfruitful any battle but instead invite interchange and conversation.

Leaving the discussion at this point of methodological pluralism would be equivalent to suggesting that the disarray is not only good but the entire story. To rush to another episode in the narrative may be arrogant and patronizing. Let me, then, tentatively suggest that there may be some unity not given in the beginning but dimly perceived in the process and at least projected as a goal or an ideal. Do we have expectations which all theories or ideas should meet if they are to be designated good or of high quality? Likely so.

Certainly theories guide research and create data and shape observations of phenomena selected for observation. What should we expect of theories or ideas? At least that their terms be coherent and consistent, for otherwise anomalies are generated which vitiate the explanatory power we seek. In addition to internal consistency, external fruitfulness is desirable, for we expect a theory to do something a summary or a generalization doesn't do. Otherwise we satisfy ourselves with saying that things are complex, often taken to be a sign of profundity. Reduction to simplicity is a legitimate and necessary *desideratum* of a theory or an idea.

Further, adequacy and comprehensiveness of scope are important features of a good idea; a theory which explains only part of the data or more than the data begs for revision. Parsimony or elegance is also characteristic of a theory we call good; topics for explanation must be demarked, and having too many explanatory terms results in a theory which tries to do everything and actually does nothing except perhaps satisfy some psychological or mystical need.

I haven't tried to build any theory or even theorize about theorizing, although that is what we in our learning should do. I have tried to suggest some criteria which good theories must meet in order to be called good, and to show that no one discipline (be it theology or even philosophy!) can or should lead all others or integrate all others.

And through it all, I have assumed that underlying our academic work (as all of human life) is a perspective or a synoptic vision or a framework we together share, and that this standpoint can be articulated as a set of control beliefs which can and should guide and influence our academic activities of thinking and learning and creating ideas. Marxists and Freudians and Buddhists and Muslims and a host of others do that, drawing on their deepest convictions and commitments. Shouldn't we, too, strive for wisdom and insight? Shouldn't we, too, fulfill our responsibilities and complete the thoughts that stir humans so deeply?

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Books

George Marsden's book should become required reading for students of American religion and culture.

Reinterpreting the Fundamentalists

Review Essay

Mel Piehl

Fundamentalism and American Culture

The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925. **By George M. Marsden. New York: Oxford University Press. 306 pp. $19.95.**

Considering the tremendous importance of fundamentalist religion in American life in both the past and present, it is remarkable how little attention it has received from historians, who generally delight in tracking down such pervasive cultural forces. Whether we like it or not, Protestant fundamentalism and its close ally, conservative evangelicalism, have shaped the ideas, values, and politics of millions of Americans during the last century, yet historians know less about this movement than they do about the Greenback Party or the Townsendites. If one believes that there should be some correlation between the significance of an historical phenomenon and the attention given it by historians, then fundamentalism presents a ripe topic for investigation.

Fortunately, George Marsden's recent book, *Fundamentalism and American Culture,* takes a big step toward correcting this imbalance. An historian at Calvin College, Marsden is the first really sophisticated scholar to take a close look at the whole fundamentalist phenomenon in order to uncover its roots and try to understand how it became such a powerful presence in American life. Although it takes a few mis-steps and leaves plenty of questions unanswered, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* should become required reading for anyone who wants to understand modern American religion and culture.

As he ventures into this virgin intellectual territory, Marsden's first major task is to clarify just what fundamentalism is and to locate it historically. Although many people think of any kind of strict religiosity or moral narrowness as "fundamentalism," and imagine that it has always been around in some form or another, this is not the case. American Protestant fundamentalism is actually a specific religious movement that arose around the turn of the century, and bears a distinct relationship to American culture. Although it is a puzzling and terribly complex affair—at least as complex as the liberal Protestantism it opposed—American fundamentalism possesses a clearly definable origin and outlook that make it susceptible to historical investigation and understanding.

Marsden provides a neat definition of fundamentalism. It is "militantly anti-modernist Protestant evangelicalism. Fundamentalists were evangelical Christians, close to the tradition of the dominant American revivalist establishment of the nineteenth century, who in the twentieth century militantly opposed both modernism in theology and the cultural changes that modernism endorsed." Fundamentalism was never a church or a creed, but rather a movement, "in the sense of a development or tendency in Christian thought that gradually took on its own identity." Although it eventually developed a distinct life, identity, and eventually a subculture of its own, fundamentalism never existed wholly independently of the various other movements from which it grew and took strength.

Fundamentalism thus appeared as something new in American religion, but it sprang from something much older and deeper in American experience. In the fundamentalists' powerful sense of connection with the American past, Marsden asserts, lies one of the keys to their peculiar worldview, the immense importance they attached to cultural and moral questions, and their curious relationship with the whole of American life.

Like its liberal Protestant enemy, fundamentalism was essentially a variant of the much broader stream of American evangelical Protestantism. In the nineteenth century, as is well known, that form of religion was so pervasive in this country that it became virtually identified with the whole national experience and culture, which was understood to comprise what Martin Marty has called a "righteous empire." Marsden's story thus begins around 1870, when that unofficial evangelical establishment was still largely unified, confident, and possessed of great cultural prestige and power. Within a few decades, however, the evangelical empire was broken up by the new social, intellectual, moral, and religious forces that created the quite different culture of modern America.

As they lost power, prestige, and intellectual respectability, many evangelical Protestants felt an acute sense of displacement and loss.

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If fundamentalism was simply the defensive reaction of a dying way of life, then it might be explained—and written off—primarily in sociological terms.

Looking back to a better time, they felt themselves to be "internal immigrants" in an America that was often as strange to them as it was to newcomers from abroad. Increasingly pushed into a marginal subculture outside the centers of intellect and power, many began to fight back against a modern society that, they believed, had turned its back on Christianity and lost its way.

If fundamentalism was simply the defensive reaction of a dying way of life, then it might be explained primarily in sociological terms—as indeed it was so understood, and written off, by most of its contemporary opponents. Marsden does begin by recognizing the core of truth in this theory. But he persuasively argues that it is an inadequate interpretation of the whole phenomenon. It fails to explain the many genuinely new elements in fundamentalism, and cannot account for fundamentalism's persistence long after America ceased to be an agrarian/small town society. Above all it reckons without the powerful religious concerns that motivated the fundamentalists and shaped the character of their anti-modernist crusade.

Marsden's history of the movement therefore shifts attention from the sociological components of fundamentalism to its religious impulses. In uncovering the major emphases that went to make up fundamentalism, Marsden in effect provides a religious interpretation of the origins and development of the movement. Fundamentalism's reaction to modern industrial society and to particular events—especially World War I—are still seen as important, but they are more readily understood when the fundamentalists' novel religious outlook is taken into account. By focussing on its religious premises, Marsden is able to explain some otherwise baffling features of fundamentalism: its almost schizophrenic ambivalence about America and its future, its curious relations with the churches, and its pronounced tension between "trust and distrust" of reason and the intellect.

Four major religious strands were woven into fundamentalism. These were: Moodyite revivalism, premillennial dispensationalism, the holiness movement, and orthodox Calvinist—primarily Presbyterian—resistance to liberal theology, especially the new Biblical scholarship. Each of these elements was to some extent independent of fundamentalism, and their differences often created internal tension in the movement, but they were united in their hostility to the enemy—modernism—and in their conviction that they had the correct religious answer to modern questioning.

Moodyite revivalism is the least interesting source of fundamentalism, and therefore easy to overlook, but Marsden shows how Moody's work led to fundamentalism. Dwight L. Moody himself lacked a crucial fundamentalist quality: he disliked controversy and considered theology totally unimportant. But his immensely popular style of "soul-saving, world-denying evangelism" contributed in numerous ways to fundamentalism. Moody stood in the long line of great American evangelistic revivalists stretching back through Charles G. Finney, Lyman Beecher, Timothy Dwight, and Jonathan Edwards. But unlike his illustrious predecessors, Moody was uninterested in religious ideas and strongly emphasized the duty of Christians to turn away from "the fallen world." "The world is a wrecked vessel," he frequently proclaimed. "God has given me a lifeboat and said, 'Moody, save all you can.'" Moody retained cordial relations with the leading Protestant liberals throughout his life, but his younger friends and lieutenants formed the elite shock troops of fundamentalism.

If Moodyism represented the simplest impulses of American religiosity, premillennial dispensationalism was one of its more exotic products. Its complex, esoteric doctrinal notions about the different "ages of mankind," leading up to the coming apocalypse, are almost impenetrable to the outsider or novice, yet they provided much of the framework within which fundamentalists interpreted Scripture, history, and American culture. Based on a fantastic reading of the Books of Daniel and Revelation by the British Bible commentator John Nelson Darby (and hence sometimes called "Darbyite premillennialism"), dispensationalism reversed the usual American millennial optimism and became deeply pessimistic about "the present age" or dispensation, hostile to virtually all efforts at "human self-improvement," and expectant of divine delivery.

Through Darby's American disciple, D. I. Scofield, premillennialism greatly affected fundamentalism as well as such related but independent movements as the Jehovah's Witnesses. So deep was its influence that an earlier writer, Ernest Sandeen, virtually identified fundamentalism with dispensationalism. Marsden considers this equation overstated, but acknowledges that premillennial thought provided the most distinctive color to the fundamentalist outlook.

One of Marsden's greatest achievements is to offer some insight into the seemingly strange dispensational doctrines. His most brilliant chapter shows the complex intellectual connections between premillennial dispensationalism and certain specific problems that had developed for Christian thinkers during the historically-minded nineteenth century. As Marsden notes, the ideas of a contest between God and Satan over human destiny culminating in an apocalypse at the end of time

If the truth of God was the same for all ages, the fundamentalists reasoned, then the Bible was the surest means permanently and precisely to display this truth.

were old religious ideas. But nineteenth-century developments in economics, history, biology, and geology raised acute new questions about the nature of historical epochs and how change occurred. Within the context of their supernaturalist premises and gloomy cultural stance, the fundamentalists developed a consistent, self-contained scheme that could answer almost every question about history and the world.

But in solving one set of problems, fundamentalism made another commitment that became crucial to its entire outlook: belief in the literal, infallible truth of the Bible. As Marsden notes, the Bible had long occupied a central place in Protestant piety, and was especially revered in America where church authority was weak and religion highly personal. In its search for a religious authority that could stem the rising tide of liberalism, fundamentalism went one step further and proclaimed the absolute "inerrancy" of Scripture. This doctrine was given its first clear expression in 1881 by A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield, who asserted that Christianity required belief that "the Scriptures not only contain, but are the *Word of God,* and hence that all their elements and all their affirmations are absolutely errorless and binding on the faith and obedience of men."

As Marsden observes, this view of Biblical authority placed tremendous importance on the *written* word as the guarantee of stable truth amidst the flux of time. If the truth of God was the same for all ages, the fundamentalists reasoned, then the written Word of God was the surest means permanently and precisely to display this truth. And the obvious subjectivity involved in accepting only some parts of Scripture as true gave the doctrine of inerrancy an appealing air of consistency. But the consequence was to make the Bible not simply a definitive religious authority, but a repository of truth on all matters it mentioned.

This view of Scripture became one of the most distinctive features of American fundamentalism, and set it apart from more experientially or emotionally oriented forms of folk religion such as Pentecostalism. Far from being ignorant or anti-rational, fundamentalism was in fact hyper-rationalistic, as it tried to counteract the spurious evidence and reason of modern science with the firmer truth to be found in the Holy Book.

But if the methods were rationalistic, the results were often wildly eccentric. In *What the Bible Teaches* (1898), the fundamentalist Biblical writer Reuben Torrey compiled more than three thousand "propositions" conclusively proven by the Bible. In 1922 *Moody Monthly* published an argument correlating the seven days of creation with the seven notes in the octave, relating these to the seven sayings of Christ and the seven parts of Psalm 23, and concluding "what need we of further proof that all Scripture is God-breathed?" By this time such fundamentalist readings were being mocked and satirized by H. L. Mencken and other critics. But the work was superfluous; the fundamentalists caricatured themselves.

In a work on "Scripture numerics," fundamentalist writer Ivan Panin claimed to have demonstrated that if one counts up all the words and letters in any given section of the Bible, the total arrived at will always be a multiple of seven. A fundamentalist magazine presented this work as "an unanswerable proof of the divine authority of the Bible which no critic has ever dared answer." In something of an understatement, it added that "while life is too short for the ordinary Bible student to attempt to go into the details in following up this system, he can at least take a great deal of comfort in the discovery and can safely rest assured that it cannot be disproven."

Such instances represented extremes, but they were logical extensions of the literalist and premillennial approaches to Scripture that all fundamentalists shared. And no matter how much inerrancy weakened their intellectual standing, fundamentalists found the doctrine so crucial to their case that they could not back away from it.

If dispensationalism and Bibli-

By explaining the philosophical underpinning of fundamentalism, Marsden succeeds in making it more comprehensible. But he winds up pushing his argument too far.

cism provided the theological fuel for fundamentalism, the "holiness movement" underlay much of its moral and cultural activism. The broad holiness revival of the late nineteenth century was actually a development within the Methodist wing of American Protestantism that had long stressed the necessity of moral improvement or perfection in the Christian believer, and it led to the creation of several new denominations such as the Pentecostalists. But one faction of the holiness movement, particularly influenced by the Keswick conferences in England, ended up closely allied with the other fundamentalists. With considerable doctrinal variation, these elements spurred fundamentalist social and moral crusades in such areas as vice, divorce, poverty, sabbath-keeping, prohibition, gambling, and so on. Marsden correctly notes that many of these movements, such as prohibition, were not conducted by fundamentalists alone, but were carried on by broader evangelical coalitions. But for fundamentalists they constituted part of a general crusade against modernism, which they saw as the source of practically every social evil in contemporary America.

Finally, fundamentalism grew out of the efforts of orthodox denominational scholars to prevent what they saw as the erosion of Christian doctrine by modern culture and religious liberalism. These fundamentalists often had intellectual perspectives that others in the movement lacked and made more serious efforts to identify the new and dangerous heresies produced by the modern world. Exemplified on a scholarly plane by the Princeton theologians J. Gresham Machen and Charles Hodge, and on a more popular level by the twelve volumes of *The Fundamentals* published between 1910 and 1915, these conservative Protestants mounted a counter-attack on the spreading Protestant liberalism by showing how it had increasingly abandoned various articles of orthodox Christianity. Often the major effort was directed to defending particular "miraculous" items of belief, such as the creation of Adam and Eve, the virgin birth, the descent into hell, and the resurrection. But as the intellectuals in the movement understood, this was partly a tactic to gain popular support. Their real target was the new worldview that, they contended, had entered the modern world with the rise of nineteenth-century science, and that threatened a contrary worldview based on the Bible and Scottish Common Sense philosophy.

Marsden demonstrates that the more sophisticated fundamentalists were consistent adherents of a Common Sense philosophical tradition that went back to the eighteenth century. The Common Sense thinkers held that the basic truths about nature, man, and God were accessible to all rational men. Through the application of reason to empirically demonstrable facts about the world, the eternally sure and valid laws of nature and nature's God could be discerned and applied. Although there might appear to be a considerable gap between ordinary experience and reason and Christian dogma, the Common Sense tradition solved the difficulty at one stroke by making the Bible an equally valid repository of necessary factual truth. As Charles Hodge stated in his volume *Systematic Theology:*

> If natural science be concerned with the facts and laws of nature, theology is concerned with the facts and principles of the Bible. If the object of the one be to arrange and systematize the facts of the external world, and to ascertain the laws by which they are determined, the object of the other is to systematize the facts of the Bible, and ascertain the principles or general truths which those facts involve.

Since the words of Scripture, like nature, presented actual facts about the world, and not simply subjective ideas subject to error, they were equally accessible to the rational human mind, which would discover there the eternal laws of salvation and morality.

By explaining this philosophical underpinning of fundamentalism, Marsden succeeds in making it more comprehensible. But he goes astray in arguing that these writers presented an intellectually defensible alternative to the worldview emerging from modern science and philosophy. In a crucial chapter entitled, "Fundamentalism as an Intellectual Phenomenon," Marsden brings in the theories of Thomas Kuhn to argue that fundamentalists were not really anti-intellectual or anti-scientific, but rather that they operated with a different "perceptual model" of the universe. The fundamentalists, Marsden contends, were operating with the Baconian and Newtonian paradigms that had dominated Western science until the mid-nineteenth century, when they were replaced by first Darwinian and then Einsteinian paradigms. Hence the fundamentalists could claim, legitimately, that they were not opposed to science as such:

> Rather, they were judging the standards of the later scientific revolution by the standards of the first—the revolution of Bacon and Newton. In their view, science depended on fact and demonstration. Darwinism, so far as they could see, was based on neither. The larger objection, of course, was that the evolutionary approach to the interpretation of biology and history took only natural causes into account, to the total exclusion of the supernatural.

This is an intriguing line of defense, but it will not hold up. However valid Kuhn's theory is in explaining scientific transformations, it cannot buttress the fundamentalist position. Even by Newton's time, physical science had advanced far beyond the simple "fact-demonstration-law" model imagined by the fundamentalists. Much of Newtonian physics, for example, rested on highly complex postulates about

Fundamentalists were excluded from the temples of science not because they held to different scientific paradigms, but because they were not scientists at all.

the nature of time and space that were far removed from "common sense." As Newton himself says in the *Principia*, "The common people conceive those quantities (time, space, place, and motion) under no other notions but from the relation they bear to sensible objects. And thence arise certain prejudices, for the removing of which it will be convenient to distinguish them. . . ."

Even if the fundamentalists were as devoted to Baconian and Newtonian science as Marsden suggests (and his evidence on this point is not convincing), this was probably because science until Darwin could, without too many intellectual gymnastics, be reconciled with a Scriptural worldview. But with Darwin the gap became too great—or at least greater than could be bridged by any intellectual system as simple as Common Sense philosophy. This was not only because the intellectual "paradigms" had changed, but because there were new scientific facts which were incompatible with fundamentalist assumptions. Confronted with such facts, the good scientist suspends judgment and begins the search for explanations. But the fundamentalists instead reached for the hymnal. They thus more nearly resembled those in the Papal court who refused to look through Galileo's telescope than they did Bacon or Newton.

In explaining how the fundamentalists lost intellectual authority, Marsden comes close to endorsing the fundamentalist charge that there was some sort of conspiracy against fundamentalist "scientists," and that Darwinian scientists were just as "dogmatic" and biased as their opponents.

Non-Darwinists, of course, were ostracized from scientific circles. Similarly, the modern theological community adopted a model for truth that in effect stigmatized theologians who rejected evolutionary views as neither scientific nor legitimate theologians. The conservatives were equally dogmatic. No compromise could be made with a worldview whose proponents denied the fixed character of supernaturally guaranteed truth. Communication between the two sides became impossible. Fundamentalists, excluded from the community of modern theological and scientific orthodoxy, eventually were forced to establish their own community and sub-culture in which their own ideas of orthodoxy were preserved.

But such attempts to put modern scientists and fundamentalists on the same intellectual plane are doomed to failure. Fundamentalists were not excluded from the temples of science because they held to different scientific paradigms, but because they were not scientists at all, and refused to accept the essential premises of a scientific worldview in approaching nature. One can, perhaps, respect the courage of those who reject those premises, but not their complaints about being shut out of the prestigious scientific enterprises.

Marsden denies that the fundamentalists were truly anti-intellectual.

Marsden's attempted rehabilitation of fundamentalism's anti-Darwinism goes along with his general defense of fundamentalists against the charge of being anti-intellectual. Insofar as it refutes caricatures of all fundamentalists as simply mindless primitives, this is a proper corrective. But anti-intellectualism can mean something other than being altogether without rational thought; it can refer to a certain rigid cast of mind hostile to the free play of ideas that usually accompanies serious intellectual endeavor. Very little in Marsden's account contradicts the view that fundamentalism was anti-intellectual in this sense. Although the fundamentalists' immediate foe was twentieth-century modernism, many of them seem really to have objected to any kind of questioning or uncertainty about basic matters. One suspects that had they been there, fundamentalists would have walked out of Peter Abelard's classrooms in the twelfth century.

Especially significant in this regard is the fundamentalists' complete inability to cope not simply with the conclusions but with the basic questions raised by the new Biblical criticism emerging from Germany at the time. While fundamentalist writers could construct at least superficially plausible attacks on Darwinism, their only response to the higher criticism was that it somehow represented a peculiar aberration of German "idealism," and that the whole enterprise threatened Christianity. With the beginning of World War I, fundamentalists even found an audience for their argument that "corrupt German Biblical scholarship was at the root of the astounding moral collapse of German civilization." Plainly, it was not that the fundamentalists disagreed with the higher criticism, but that they did not understand it, and did not want to understand it.

While the fundamentalist intellectuals who held to such views are intriguing figures precisely because of the blinders they deliberately kept on, the attention Marsden gives them may exaggerate their importance. In my opinion Marsden understates the character of fundamentalism as a popular folk movement. Sober scholars like Hodge and Machen may have led the charge against apostate liberals, but fundamentalism derived much of its mass following from simple folk in the pews who found all the new ideas "confusing" and clung to the "old-time religion." This circumstance led to curious doings within the fundamentalist camp, as those who tried to retain an intellectual posture were forced to cope with the undignified antics of their rank-and-file supporters. Thus, the highly cultured Machen was appalled by what he

Fundamentalism suffered a great defeat in the Scopes trial. But it did not, as is often thought, disappear. It licked its wounds and prepared to fight another day.

found when he was invited to address the Winona Bible Conference: "Practically every lecture, on whatever subject," he reported, "was begun by the singing of some of the popular jingles, often accompanied by the blowing of enormous horns or other weird instruments of music."

Just as he underestimates the folk element in fundamentalism, Marsden may insufficiently stress its appeal as popular entertainment. Along with its serious work of saving souls, American revivalism had always been in the business of putting on a good show. Moody's revivals were, among other things, impressively staged productions, carefully calculated to have the proper emotional effect on the audience, and his fundamentalist successors were also well-versed in the show-biz tricks of their trade. It was no accident that the second best-known fundamentalist leader of the early twentieth century was Billy Sunday, whose previous occupation had been that of a major league baseball player. The switch from the outfield to the revival stump may have required different skills, but there was no need to change the essential knack of pleasing the crowd.

The *best* known fundamentalist leader, of course, was William Jennings Bryan. A three-time presidential candidate and Secretary of State of the United States, Bryan had developed a great mass following as a politician, and American politicians, too, have often been as much in the business of entertainment as of government. Bryan brought his gifts of oratory and phrasemaking from the campaign trail to the sawdust trail. "It is better to trust the Rock of Ages," he told delighted crowds, "than to know the age of rocks." Bryan's rise to leadership of the fundamentalist movement coincided with its increasing politicization after World War I, when, for a variety of reasons, fundamentalists made organized efforts to gain control of major Protestant denominations and to translate their views into law, especially in the public school systems. Playing for high stakes, the fundamentalists waged a determined battle that, in Marsden's judgment, fell just short of winning control of the mainline churches.

But those who lived by the sword of publicity could also die by it. The Scopes trial in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925 was great theater, with two superb performers, Bryan and Clarence Darrow, playing their parts to perfection. But Bryan ended up as second banana. I have always thought Bryan the much more humanly sympathetic figure at Dayton, and some of his summations about the consequences of a purely materialistic age were genuinely moving. But Darrow, cheered on by an even greater American publicist, H. L. Mencken, showed Bryan up for a fool.

When Bryan died on the Sunday after the trial, Mencken's obituary for him was also taken by many as an obituary for the supposedly backwoods phenomenon of fundamentalism. It was appropriate, Mencken observed, that Bryan had spent his last days in a "one-horse Tennessee village," because Bryan loved all country people, including the "gaping primates of the upland valleys. He delighted in greasy victuals of the farmhouse kitchen, country smells, and the tune of cocks crowing on the dunghill." Bryan had made the grade of a country saint. "His place in Tennessee hagiography is secure. If the village barber saved any of his hair, then it is curing gallstones down there today."

Fundamentalism did suffer a great defeat at Dayton. Its greatest popular hero had been humiliated and ridiculed. Within a few years fundamentalists had been practically driven out of the major northern denominations and destroyed as a political force in American life.

But fundamentalism did not disappear. Rather, it licked its wounds and prepared to fight another day. As Marsden hints, and the current research of historian Joel Carpenter suggests, fundamentalists after 1925 simply withdrew from the national scene in order to concentrate on building up strength in local congregations and in informal voluntary alliances. Largely hidden from view, fundamentalists nevertheless retained considerable strength in the popular religious life of the country. The spectacular career of Billy Graham in the post-World War II era, for example, should have alerted keen observers that the fundamentalist-conservative evangelical style of religion was by no means finished as a force in American religion and life. By the 1960s fundamentalists were enjoying increasing wealth and confidence, and were ready to resume old battles on new ground. From the perspective of the 1980s, the neo-fundamentalist takeover of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in 1969 might be seen as a forerunner of the dramatic resurgence of fundamentalism in other areas of American public life.

The recent resurgence of fundamentalism in political as well as religious life gives Marsden's book a timely interest not usually reserved for historical studies. In no other modern Western nation did this particular sort of response play such a conspicuous and pervasive role in the culture, and it appears that role is not yet ended. Foreign observers, who were openly baffled by this feature of American life ("Perhaps no recent event stands more in need of explanation," said one British writer about the Scopes trial) may be equally puzzled by current developments. For those here and abroad who want to understand fundamentalism, a religious force deeply rooted in the American past, there could be few better places to start than *Fundamentalism and American Culture.*

Theatre I

A new British musical based on T. S. Eliot's celebration of cats is an ailurophile's delight.

T. S. Eliot At the Top Of the Pops

SCAT
CAST
ACTS
CATS

Richard Lee

Singing at astronomical heights
Handeling pieces from the *Messiah,*
Hallelujah, angelic choir
The mystical divinity of unashamed felinity
Round the cathedral sang *Vivat!*
Life to the everlasting cat.
—*Cats* Prologue: Jellicle Songs
For Jellicle Cats

I begin by letting the cat out of the bag. This review of *Cats* is written by a lover of cats. Not just my cats. All cats. If *Time* (December 7, 1981) is to be trusted, I have just manfully taken sides in the great cat controversy raging in America between a growing and "prodigious number of Americans" who "love 'em" and the dogged and predictable reactionaries who "hate 'em." While disinterest is apparently possible toward dogs, there seems to be very little middle ground concerning cats.

If you are still reading so biased a review, you are at least not categorically opposed to cats. Therefore, I probably owe you my theological bias too. I behold cats as catholic and dogs as protestant. At least most dogs strike me as protestant in temperament. That is, if a man wants a lot of floppy *agape,* a dog is probably best for him. Dogs are an open book, immediately accessible, denominate themselves in roving packs, worry about who is "top dog," preserve the male principle of unreflected action, and run liturgically free form. Canine grace is indiscriminate and lavish, energetic and dutiful, and dogs are pretty good at taking orders, doing tricks, and generally observing the protestant ethic of making themselves useful and improving upon the time. Dogs are probably man's best friend because they are closest to man as he is in himself.

Cats, on the other hand, seem closer to God. Certainly they are more catholic in temperament. That is, if one wants to live with a mystery which disciplines his sensibilities to some of the depths of life, a cat is perhaps best for him. Cats are independent and contemplative, perform elaborate rituals of ablution and oblation, preserve the female principle of the pondered life, and are more sensuously and fastidiously inclined to be than to do. Feline grace is precise and discriminate, conditional and subtle, and cats are more given to lives of patience and perseverance than anything like a barking and panting work ethic which might require them to be up and doing. Dogs run to and fro, but cats go in and out. Dogs frisk, but cats process. Dogs bound for you, but cats waft around you like incense. A dog may guard your door and return your tossed ball, but a cat can keep his eye on you in the dark, predict a storm in the air, and safely land on his paws if you pitch him out for the night. To live with a cat is to live with an impassively agile contented complexity which is probably a fair description of God as He is in Himself.

II

No theological choice is, of course, *ultimately* required between dogs and cats. No doubt their Creator intends to preserve and perfect both dogs and cats, not to mention protestants and catholics, when He brings His new heaven and new earth. It is, however, probably not for nothing that so deeply converted an Anglo-Catholic as T. S. Eliot was much taken by cats as pets—and as a frequent source of poetic metaphors. In one of his early poems he, like Carl Sandburg, likened fog to a cat who "rubs its muzzle on the window panes / Licked its tongue in the corners of the evening / . . . made a sudden leap / And seeing that it was a soft October night / Curled once more about the house and fell asleep." While there are other cat metaphors in his serious poems thereafter, it was in his light verses written initially for his godchildren that cats came into their own. With those poems, collected into *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats,* Eliot joyously embraced the pathetic fallacy and attributed certain human qualities to a delightful array of feline characters. Each person's cat is his own Rorschach ink-blot test, and what we all read into our cats no doubt reveals more about us than them. Yet each of us would swear that the human—and sometimes humane—qualities we see in our cats are *there* and not simply the projections of our purring imaginations.

The cats that came out of Eliot's pen are peculiarly apt prisms on the human condition, and each of his cat poems refracts something mysterious about cats which illuminates something enduring about humankind. In a sense, Eliot's cats are the "objective correlatives" he argued for in poetry generally, namely those objects the poet needs to present to sensory experience in order to evoke a particular emotion. In his cat poems the cats often seem to me the "objective correlative" of the

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It is likely that Eliot, the "Old Pussum," would have been astonished—and delighted as well—with his eventual collaborators in the production of *Cats*.

beleaguered joy of being human. When reading them to my own godchildren, I once wondered if there were any sound more fitting for harassed celebration than a loud *meow*.

Cresset readers far from childhood may need some reminding of Eliot's marvelous quire of cats. There is that old gumbie cat, Jennyanydots, who sags and slumbers by day and then rises wearily at night to tidy up the whole household, even turning the kitchen cockroaches into a troop of "well-disciplined helpful boy scouts." There is Rum Tum Tugger, the contrary cat who refuses all blandishments for his affection and "only likes what he finds for himself"; in divine freedom he "will do as he will do, and there's no doing anything about it." There is Bustopher Jones, the epicurean cat about town who dines in alleys behind the best clubs in town and wears the weight of his prosperity like a bishop. There are Mungojerrie and Rumpleteazer, the original cat burglars who work their mischief like a vaudeville act of knockabout clowns and are so inseparable they have no identity apart from both their names called at once.

There is Old Deuteronomy, so ancient he is well into his ninth or ninety-ninth life and commands the respect of all who venerate, if not age, then survival. There is Gus, the shabby theatre cat, now down on his luck but still on fire inside when he recalls the great roles he played under the catwalks in his palmier days as *Asparagus*. There is Skimbleshanks, the railway cat who resolutely takes charge of the 11:42 Night Mail Express and patrols it relentlessly to see that the mail gets through. There is Macavity, the mystery cat who is always suspected but never detected at the scene of every crime. There is Mr. Mistoffeles, the conjuring cat who can perform astounding feats of prestidigitation and legerdemain, including producing "*seven* kittens right out of a hat!" And, in remaining amphibolical order, there is Alonzo, Bombalurina, Carbuckety, Cassandra, Coricopat, Griddlebone, Growltiger, Grumbuskin, Jellylorum, Jemima, Munkstrap, Tantomile, Tumblebrutus, and Victoria.

For over forty years Eliot's cats have charmed adults of all ages, especially children, and curled up in their poems patiently waiting for a composer, director, choreographer, and stage designer to let them out of the text and into their first night at the theatre.

III

Eliot, the "Old Pussum," would have been astonished and, I believe, delighted with his eventual collaborators on the musical *Cats*. The notion for it started with Andrew Lloyd Webber, the composer of *Evita* and the rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar*, who began making music for Eliot's cat poems as "a metrical exercise at the piano." A few of his songs were performed for the delectation of friends in a club concert attended by Valerie Eliot, the poet's widow. She subsequently supplied Webber with a sheaf of unpublished poems and fragments of poems Eliot had been working on for *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. Ultimately most significant was a fragment of "Grizabella: The Glamour Cat" which Eliot left unfinished because he could see her story might be too sad for children. Nearly as significant was a reference in one of Eliot's letters to a possible direction for a "musical evening" for the poems in which he proposed that the cats might finally go "up, up, up to the Heaviside Layer"—whatever that might mean.

Enter Trevor Nunn, distinguished director for the Royal Shakespeare Company, whose stunning production of Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* is currently removed to Broadway (See "Doing Dickens Right" by Richard Maxwell in November, 1981 *Cresset*) to rave reviews. The common labor of a director of theatrical and literary classics and a pop opera musician was apparently just the potent mix *Cats* required. Their fundamental problem was the absence of a narrative for the collection of cat poems as a whole. When one considers all the wrong choices easy to make in this matter, the solution *Cats* takes is all the more satisfactory. Instead of inventing a story and narrator—the "Old Possum" himself comes to mind, or even the "Man in White Spats" to whom the poems are dedicated—Nunn and Webber draw the narrative out of the very essence of the poems themselves. Almost all the cats in the poems are *survivors* in one way or another, and that feline capacity to survive is the fundamental grace that unifies their several separate stories.[1]

The next step was to choose one of the cats as the exemplar of feline survival, and it wasn't far to go to pick Grizabella who loved much but not too wisely with every tom in town.[2] By adding a few lines to Eliot's own "Song of the Jellicles" for the Jellicle cat ball, the narrative is set to reveal the one exemplary cat Old Deuteronomy will choose to go "up, up, up to the Heaviside Layer" at the end of the ball. This modestly forced device puts just enough suspense into the evening, explains the gathering of all the cats, and brings the musical to its concatenations of frabjus joy when forlorn and tattered Griza-

[1] Even Simon Bond's ailurophobic *101 Uses for a Dead Cat* pays a certain perverted homage to feline survival.

[2] Grizabella sings the theme song "Memory" which Nunn adapted from Eliot's "Rhapsody on a Windy Night." Webber's torch music for her lament reminds me of his "I Don't Know How to Love Him" for Mary Magdalene in *Jesus Christ Superstar* and seems to link the two characters. Elaine Paige's recording of "Memory" now plays out of every pub juke box in England.

A second production of *Cats* will be opening on Broadway this autumn, and tickets should be ordered now, even at Broadway prices. You need not like cats to like *Cats*.

bella at last is chosen. She goes spinning up to the "Heaviside Layer" (and literally out of the theatre by a silver stairway which drops mid-air to meet her ascent and take her out through the roof) during a roisterous and rumbustious finale. The audience is left to decide what the "Heaviside Layer" may be—reincarnation, apotheosis, coronation, sainthood, or simply the sympathetic orgasm of the universe when any of its creatures great or small finds something bright and beautiful. As the finale is staged, sung, and danced at the New London Theatre on Drury Lane, there is nothing left for Hollywood to do.

Cats is sung and danced from beginning to end, and none of the cast is ever offstage or often at rest. The overture is performed in the dark with (literally) thousands of cat eyes gleaming and winking at the audience while the dancers slip silently toward the stage set in the round. As the theatre lights come up on the revolving stage—an immense scrap heap of junked automobiles and spare tires, scaled outsize to make the dancers proportionately the size of cats—the audience is immediately plunged into total theatre. English music hall and Christmas pantomime conventions, much less the conventions of an American Halloween masquerade of people dressed up in cat costumes, are left far behind. Rather, Gillian Lynne, the choreographer, has so turned her dancers into cats that one suspects she worked witchcraft on them. Costumed in the barest suggestions of felinity—in a style I can only describe as sub-punk[3]—the dancers move the audience through the sinuous, stealthy, and stalking worlds of Eliot's domestic cats by day and into the brawling, caterwauling, and reveling worlds of his wild cats by night.

Webber's score is not, in my hearing, as fresh and winsome as his earlier work, and some of the electronic organ orchestrations are too hurdy-gurdy, but the music is more than serviceable. He gives the dancers ample jazz, blues, swing, and rock tunes, as well as some chanties, torch songs, and pizzicato patter songs to explore all the movements of cats that men and women can incarnate. Indeed, it seemed to me that some of the dancers may have had cat backbone transplants to pull off some of the suppler numbers—and perhaps claw transplants when they danced on the balustrades of the balcony. The audience quickly suspends disbelief as the cast sings and dances us into the lives and loves of each of Eliot's cats and moves up triumphantly to the finale of Grizabella's ascension. When Brian Blessed as Old Deuteronomy (American audiences will remember Blessed as Bach in the Lutheran Television Production of "The Joy of Bach") concludes the performance with a sung declamation of Eliot's "The Naming of Cats," the cast scats down the aisles to dance in the audience and some of the younger members of the audience rise up to dance with them. Even us older members of the audience were not sure whether the cast should be applauded or given caviar and cream.

Eliot would have loved the total theatricality of the evening, even its pop sensibility, and he may further have enjoyed the irony that *Cats* is clearly more popular than any of his own weighty plays. Surely he knew that sometimes the world ends not with a bang but a whisker.

IV

As this review is written in early February, Andrew Lloyd Webber has just accepted a West End Theatre Critics Award as the composer of *Cats*. At the ceremony he was pleased to announce that a second production of *Cats* was to open on Broadway this autumn, and he was thus further honored by the American invitation to bring this English musical to the world center of musical comedy. His modesty is commendable, of course, but I wonder if that world center has not now shifted to London and America is again the provinces.

Meanwhile, order your tickets now, even at Broadway prices. You need not like cats to like *Cats*. Of course, if you are biased in that way and are a bit of a cat-holic, you will have your own reward.

[3] The "Eurodecadent" style of the punk-derived costumes gives the spectacle a somewhat sinister aspect and helps save the show from seeming "cute."

At the Bread Line

When God comes,
he does not come alone,
he brings his crowd,

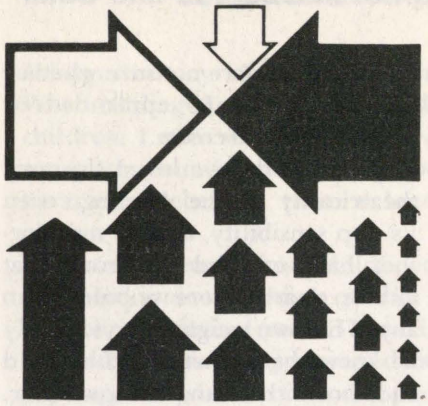
the poor,
shivering, almost
without skin,

each carrying
a newspaper bundle
of memories,

and hope, a pair
of shoes that don't
quite fit.

Sister Maura

The Nation



The Limits of Power

In Poland and El Salvador the Superpowers Face Similar Limitations

Albert R. Trost

There is always a considerable difference between the capability of power and the exercise of power.

If there is one concept that is central to the discipline of political science it is *power.* Political scientists are always talking about it, defining it, measuring it, criticizing others' use of it, and using it themselves. Despite all of this attention there is still a good deal of disagreement about what it is, where it is, and how it is used.

Still, there would be general agreement on two conceptual points. Power is generally understood to be control over the behavior of others. In addition, there is agreement that there is a difference between the *ingredients of power,* sometimes called capabilities, and the *exercise of power.* It is the exercise of power, an act, which is most directly associated with control of others' behavior. While these distinctions are second-nature to political scientists, and obvious to many others not in the discipline, they sometimes seem to escape our public officials, those who are formally charged with the exercise of power.

To focus on the international system, there is some agreement among experts in the field of international relations that the size of armies, possession of nuclear weapons, access to natural resources, industrial capacity, food production, and size of population and land are important ingredients of power. There is much less agreement on the relative importance of each of these. For instance, is the possession of nuclear weapons more important than independence of foreign sources of oil? Even harder to get agreement on are the so-called "intangible" ingredients of power and their importance in the total inventory. Included in the list of "intangibles" would be the quality of leadership and decision-making in a society, the democratic or non-democratic nature of the regime, and public agreement on national goals and objectives. The number of ingredients on the list and the weight assigned to each vary considerably from expert to expert.

No one doubts that the list of ingredients favors both the United States and the Soviet Union. It favors them to such an extent that they rate the title, "super-power." There is also agreement on ranking the capabilities of China, Japan, and India over Burma and Singapore, Brazil and Argentina over Panama and Ecuador, and France over Finland.

To simply compare the ingredients of power is not enough when attempting to explain the power relationships between two states. The stiff resistance of Finland to Soviet aggression in the "Winter War" of 1939-40 could not have been anticipated from comparing capabilities. More recently, the match-up of the United States and North Vietnam seemed to point strongly in the direction of American ability to dictate terms to the other party. One would think that the historical lessons have been sufficient to warn any nation pretending to "great power" status against assuming easy or direct influence over seemingly lesser powers. Two nations that seem to be equating the ingredients of power with power itself are the United States as it deals with El Salvador, and the Soviet Union as it tries to influence Poland.

James Fallows, in an article in the October, 1979, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* on American defense policy, suggests a metaphor that is helpful for understanding our conceptual problems with power. The title of the article was "Muscle-Bound Superpower." To draw the metaphor in more detail, the Soviet Union and the United States are in the position of a well-developed weight-lifter who finds himself in the middle of a street fight where the weapons are razors, bats, bricks, and cunning. The weight-lifter has been training for a competition with another weight-lifter. But strength and well-developed muscles are of little use in the street fight.

Both the US and the USSR face situations where they are, in a sense, "muscle-bound."

The Soviet Union apparently would like Poland to adopt a more orthodox and deferential Marxist-Leninist posture. It would like limits placed on the influence of the Solidarity union and the Roman Catholic church. The Russians generally would like to see a Poland with fewer ties to the West. They certainly would prefer a more substantial economic contribution from the Poles. These are the general goals and objectives of the Russians for Poland. So far, their impressive inventory of capabilities has been inadequate to achieving these objectives. The Russian nuclear weapons' capability obviously has little application. The capability to launch a

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The "ripple effect" of our involvement in El Salvador can be felt in Western Europe, where it has a negative effect on our influence with our NATO allies.

thorough invasion of Poland could also not be directly translated into controlling Polish behavior in the direction of Soviet goals. An invasion would most likely put Russians, not Poles in charge.

But the real inhibition on the use of enormous Russian capabilities to influence the direction of Polish policy is the unpredictable effect it would have on the Russians' ability to influence or control the behavior of others outside the Polish ruling circle. The unpredictable elements include the reaction of the Polish masses and the reaction of other European nations. In other words, the Soviet Union is called on to exercise power in a world complicated by the mobilization of the masses (popular democracy) and the phenomenon of the interdependence of nations. Governments can no longer be isolated in most countries from their population for purposes of directly applying pressure. Nor can nations be isolated as easily from other nations in a selective application of force.

The Russians not only have to be concerned about the consequences of their exercise of power for the behavior of the Polish ruling elite, but for the behavior of the Polish masses as well. They have to be concerned not only with the reaction of the Reagan administration to their exercise of power, but of governments and populations in Europe. What may seem like a gain in the policy of Polish rulers through the application of martial law or the threat of an invasion may set back the neutralist, anti-NATO tide that is running in some of the nations of Western Europe. The Soviet Union has to be concerned that in winning more control in Poland it does not lose influence with neutralist groups in Holland and West Germany that are putting pressure on their governments not to go along with President Reagan's nuclear arms plans for Western Europe. Even more critical, the exercise of Soviet power in Poland through martial law or invasion may mobilize large sectors of the Polish population to oppose Russian control.

From the restraint it has shown so far in Poland, the Soviet Union probably understands better than the Reagan Administration the pitfalls in assuming that "super-power" status and capabilities are the same as *super power.*

American failure to comprehend the concept of power seems clear in the El Salvador affair.

American failure to comprehend the concept of power seems clearest in our present involvement in El Salvador. Our objectives in that country now appear to be support of the Duarte-led junta in its fight with the insurgents, a preference for an elected, civilian government of the center or center/right, and a clear signal to Cuba and the Soviet Union that we will not tolerate their subversion of governments in Central America. Although there may be legitimate opposition to these objectives, once they are assumed the temptation is to use our tremendous advantage in capabilities in the Central American region (weapons, technology, capital, etc.) in order to try to achieve the objectives. Since El Salvador is where the immediate action is, it is easy to assume that it should be the target of our exercise of power.

There is little doubt that our capabilities are overwhelming when one contemplates their application to El Salvador. They are easily sufficient to defeat the immediate insurgency in that country. However, considerable caution is called for in isolating who and what we are trying to control, and in being aware of the "ripple effect" of our actions.

President Reagan and Secretary of State Haig have made many statements which would indicate that they think Cuba and Russia are directly behind the insurgency. If this is so, how much does the use of our capabilities in El Salvador work to control Cuban and Russian behavior? With regard to the target for our exercise of power, it is possible that a rising tide of expectations and frustration among the poor in El Salvador (and perhaps Honduras and Nicaragua) are the major reasons for the instability and insurgency. Perhaps we are applying the wrong ingredients of power.

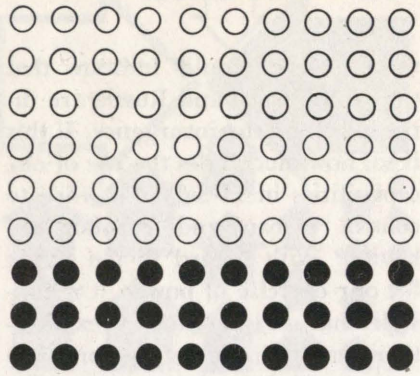
As much a reason for using caution in dealing with El Salvador as getting clear who we are trying to control is the interdependence between our influence there and our power in other parts of the region and the world. We need to be clear about the consequence of American exercise of power in El Salvador for the instability in neighboring countries like Honduras and Guatemala. As important is the relationship between our involvement in El Salvador and our relations with Mexico. Mexico is much more important to the United States than El Salvador. The "ripple effect" is even felt in Western Europe where it has an effect on our influence with our NATO allies. Recently the Dutch parliament passed a resolution condemning the United States for its exercise of power in El Salvador.

National power and its use was probably simpler in the nineteenth century. In fact, it was easier to understand (and manipulate) twenty years ago. If the United States and the Soviet Union are now operating with those out-dated pictures of the world, they will find that *super power* only exists on the inventory sheets of their respective capabilities.

It is a shame that political scientists, for all their fascination with power, cannot be more helpful. They do know enough to counsel caution.

Theatre II

Of all those involved in theatre, audiences care most about a play coming to a satisfactory end.



End of Play

Two Recent Plays Remind Us of the Importance of Ending Things Right

John Steven Paul

There is something about the end of a play that engages the critical intelligence of nearly every spectator in a theatre. In my experience, directors are typically concerned with the beginning of a play; playwrights with the middle; but audiences are always most concerned with the end. "I didn't care for the ending." "Life's full of misery. When I come to a play, I want to see a happy ending." "The play was great until the end—it seemed tacked on." "The ending was false. Life isn't like that." Lobbies and parking lots ring with judgments about the end of a play.

Certain critics and historians of drama have identified form and historical period according to the way groups of plays end. "Modern European Pessimism" became a generic term during the latter years of the nineteenth century, because plays by leading dramatists—Ibsen, Strindberg, Hauptmann, and Zola—usually ended in distinctly unhappy fashion. The French critic Ferdinand Brunetiere distinguished the major dramatic genres according to the resolution of conflict; that is, by the ways in which plays ended.

Aristotle's provocatively brief commentary on Tragic poetry opened the discussion of endings. Tragedy is, we read in the *Poetics,* an imitation of an action which has, among other features, a beginning, a middle, and an end. The end has especial significance, for it is linked to the elicitation of *catharsis* in the audience. The meaning of *catharsis* has been much disputed, but it has to do with the emotional release of the audience from the cell of terror and pity in which it has been imprisoned while viewing the play. Whatever else may be said about *catharsis,* it surely cannot be present until the play has ended.

The twentieth-century aesthetician and critic Susanne Langer submits that the play's end is of the essence of dramatic form. What Langer terms the "dramatic illusion" is equivalent to suspended form. "In a play, form is not valuable and cannot be valuable in itself, because until the play is over form does not exist. Only the suspense of form has value."[1] There *is* no dramatic form, then, until the end of the play. Drama, Langer writes elsewhere, is the poetic mode of destiny; it is action driving inexorably toward an end.

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Two recent productions illustrate the essential nature of the end in dramatic form and the importance of the end to a satisfying theatre experience. *Grownups,* a new play by Jules Feiffer, opened in New York last fall. Its popular success (at this writing the play is still running) is probably due to the playwright's excellent ear for language and his skill in setting the language down. The play is a delight to hear; the dialogue dances with sophistication and a lilting rhythm that becomes more choreographically complex as each character joins the verbal interplay.

The people in Jules Feiffer's recent play *Grownups* are like us—painfully like us.

Feiffer's subject has perennial appeal for American audiences: *Grownups* is a family play. And, though this family is situated in a specific geographical, socio-economic, and ethnic context, the people are like us—painfully like us. There are three generations here, represented by a mother and father, their grownup daughter, son, and his wife, and the son's daughter. Fueling the plot are the family members' unrealistic expectations of one another and their unspoken resentment of one another which together feed an ample reservoir of guilt. The plot proceeds like a game in which characters move through a series of confrontations, exchanges of indirect accusations, and reciprocal resentment. The more guilty feelings they can generate in one another, the further they move toward a kind of personal, though Pyrrhic, victory. Well-armed with a sense of their opponent's vulnerabilities and highly-skilled from practice, these blood relations play for blood.

The confrontation between the son, Jake, and his father, Jack, typifies the series of duels that make up the play. Jack has spent his life working hard, investing time, money, and hope in his son's success. Jake has become a success by any standard. He is comfortably affluent, married, and the father of a beautiful child. Jake is a writer for the *New York Times* and he is about to have his first book published bearing a book-jacket endorsement

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[1] Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form* (New York: Scribner's, 1953), p. 309.

Michael Weller's 1979 drama *Loose Ends* is not as gracefully or forcefully written as *Grownups*, but it finally provides a more satisfying theatre experience.

by David Halberstam. For Jack and his wife Helen, writing for the *Times* is a certification of success; a printed endorsement from Halberstam is an undreamed-of benison from above. Still, the father constantly wonders "What's new?" in his son's life, what else he's accomplished. Jack scores extra guilt points by reminding Jake often that he rarely gets to see his granddaughter: "What's new—where's my granddaughter? What's new—where's my granddaughter?" the resentful Jake barks in mocking imitation of his father.

What works for father works for son, and daughter, and daughter-in-law, and even granddaughter. Jake tells his sister Marilyn that she does their parents no good by indulging them; Marilyn responds that Jake does them no good by ignoring them. Jake pinpoints his wife Louise's failure to answer their daughter's every cry for aid as a basic flaw in their family life. Further, Jake tells Louise that it is her inability to enter into serious discussions calmly that stands in the way of overcoming family difficulties. Louise rejoins that Jake undercuts her disciplinary strategies toward Edie and fails to empathize with her situation as woman, wife, and mother. The little girl predicts personal disaster if her father doesn't help her with her homework and she shames her parents for bickering at home. Each of these accusers implies that the family's life would be perfect were it not for faults and thoughtlessness of the person being accused.

The middle of the play comprises the gradual development of a labyrynthine network of guilt and resentment transactions. This development is accompanied by an upward-spiraling of tension. Feiffer continues the spiraling in Act III. Jack and Helen come to visit Jake and Louise, escorted by their daughter Marilyn. For the first time in the play, all the characters will be in immediate proximity to one another. This confrontation has all the aspects of a *scene oblige*, a conclusive battle which will bring the drama to an end.

Grownups fails because a play is not a comic strip: a punch line will not serve as an end line.

"What's new—where's my granddaughter," Jack chants. Edie runs from him in childish revulsion. Helen presents Edie with a book, a copy of which the child already owns. The little girl's inconsiderate proclamation of the fact leads to roundabout sparring on all sorts of issues both related and unrelated to the present: how to graciously accept a gift, gratitude, respect for others' feelings, manners, rights to privacy in the home, deference, and whether or not failing to return books to a lending library is an immoral act. The scene begins to boil until Jake, unable to bear up any longer, climactically declares that he and Louise have decided to separate and, in a final masterstroke, that the unhappiness of his entire life must be blamed on his parents and their treatment of him as a child. We sense an imminent ending now. But, like other attacks in the play, Jake's hysterical thrust is parried by the competing claims of others who perceive themselves as the injured parties. Jake's intended peroration becomes only another accusation. Yet the play must end, or at least stop, for it has run its course. Edie asks her father the reason for his ranting and raving. Jake looks at her, helpless in his frustration, and says, "Edie, I've quit the *Times!*" END OF PLAY.

The play ends *in medias res.* We feel cheated. Betrayed. From its beginning, this drama was heavy with a sense of destiny: a compelling if not ominous sense that all this action was leading somewhere. It doesn't. One wonders: perhaps Feiffer intended the *New York Times* to be a symbol of the entirety of Jake's present existence. When he quits his job, his existence comes to an end. If that was the playwright's intention, it doesn't work on stage. The symbolism is not strong enough to bring a sense of closure to the plot. The structure of *Grownups* is like that of one of Feiffer's comic strips. Three frames of build-up and a final frame for a punch line. "Edie, I've quit the *Times*." What succeeds in the comics, fails in the theatre: a punch line will not serve for an end line.

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The importance of an effective ending to the success of a theatre experience is further illustrated by Michael Weller's 1979 drama *Loose Ends.* A late winter offering by Chicago's consistently excellent Steppenwolf Theatre Company, *Loose Ends* is not as gracefully or forcefully written as *Grownups,* but it is finally more satisfying.

The title of the drama prefigures its form. It is loosely written. The two central characters, Paul and Susan, encounter various characters and situations as they pass through nine years of life together. Weller arranges the highlights of these years into eight scenes, each a discrete episode with its own beginning, middle, and end.

In spite of its episodic plot, *Loose Ends* has a coherent overall form. The action begins on the island of Bali where Paul has come for a short vacation after a stint in the Peace Corps. Susan is traveling the world with a friend. In his opening monologue, Paul reveals his disillusionment with the Peace Corps, which, in his experience, has had little relevance for or positive impact on the people it was attempting to aid. The speech strikes a note that will reverberate throughout the play: the idealism born in the youth and

Art is a structured imitation of life, not an exact copy—a rendering of life, not a video tape.

innocence of the sixties is destined to be ravaged by the reality of adulthood in the seventies.

Paul and Susan part in Bali, but they meet up again in the States. Paul introduces Susan to some of his friends in the Boston area. The two decide to set up housekeeping, though without the sanction of marriage. They begin to make a spare living in independent careers—he in film editing, she in photography. Their lives and relationship change. They marry. Susan is the first to commit herself to steady work as a photographer and to begin to make concessions to the demands of her high-powered profession. Paul's film-editing business becomes increasingly successful. In the middle years of their marriage, they find that together the demands on their time and their own growth are driving a wedge between them. Paul wants a baby, Susan isn't sure. Paul's career takes him to Los Angeles; Susan's takes her to New York City. Susan becomes pregnant. Without telling Paul, she aborts the fetus. They separate. Paul remains in Boston. Susan moves to New York.

Real life is textured and tainted with matters unfinished, lingering from and belonging to all our times past.

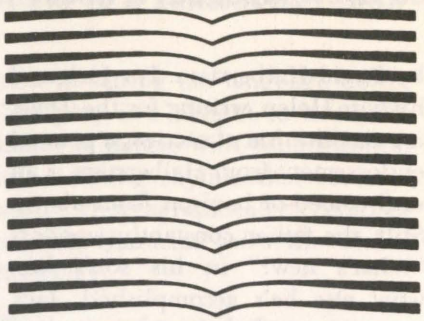
After three months, Paul and Susan reunite in New York. Now, however, there are many loose ends to be tied. They move on. People they meet become people they once knew. They prosper in their professions. They make money and with it they buy things, including the supreme symbol of American materialism, a Weber grill. Of the several loose ends that dangle untied, it is the issue of the child that trips them up. Paul learns of Susan's abortion from a friend. His pain strips him of his reason and his memory of the good times the two had enjoyed together. The play reaches a searing climax as Paul's pain erupts from him like madness and he shouts his tragic recognition of the emptiness of their relationship. The scene ends with Susan's decision to call a lawyer, but the play has not ended.

It has been the pattern of the action that a matter of unfinished business has lingered after one scene and has appeared in another. In the final scene, Weller ties up the loose ends. Paul, now divorced from Susan, is visiting her in the cottage where they were married. They reminisce about old times. A new reality intrudes upon their dreamy remembering. Jerry, Susan's boyfriend, is waiting out in the car. Paul asks when they'll see one another again, anticipating a weekend of lovemaking. "I don't think we'd better do this again," Susan replies. Car noise: it's Jerry. Susan gathers her things to leave, but before going outside, she turns to Paul. "Bye, babe," she says. "Bye," he returns. (*They hug.*) END OF PLAY.

Paul and Susan are at an end. There are no more chances, no more loose ends to be tied up. The exchanged words, "bye," have conferred an end upon the action and with that end comes release for the audience.

It is true that in life there are few absolute endings—few clean, conclusive, final statements that mark the close of one segment of experience and clean the slate for the next. Real life is textured and tainted with matters unfinished, lingering from and belonging to times past. Still, art at its best is a structured imitation of life, not an exact copy—a rendering of life, not a video tape. This is the source of art's seductive appeal for us; art is not like looking at life through a window but through a lens. Art intensifies, clarifies, and interprets life experience partly by structuring; that is, by imposing upon experience a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Books



Keeping the Faith

A Guide to the Christian Message. **By David G. Truemper and Frederick A. Niedner, Jr. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 144 pp. $5.95 (paper).**

The editor of this journal knew what he was in for. Asking as he did a doting teacher to review a book by two former, favorite students is bound to produce something incestuous. And I, having now been presented with that temptation, could hardly be expected to forego it.

So, yes, I do admit to being pleased and only a little embarrassed that years of old classroom secrets, including puns and clichés, have now surfaced in such a public medium as this theological manual for a new generation. But I hasten to add that these intergenerational borrowings are not as numerous as rumored and that where they do occur they probably do so with better grace than at their first appearings.

Naturally it is reassuring to learn that today's undergraduates will still be reading: that essentially "the Bible is problem-solving literature," that its God is the decisive "evaluator," that his "criticism" or "diagnosis" is consistently "far worse" than we prefer, reflecting "the law's double bind" ("Damned-if-you-do-and-damned-if-you-don't") and a justice which is "merely fair"; also that his justice is "trumped" by his mercy in Jesus Christ, whose aptest title is "the friend of sinners," who "became Lord by becoming . . . the 'curse' for us," necessitating his cross and only therefore his resurrection; also that his "promises can

be received only by trusting them," faith being "the one means of setting into effect the reality that is promised"; also that the foremost task of Christian theology is "keeping the Good News good," and doing so by means of "the double test for doctrine: make maximum use of the crucified Christ, and provide comfort and consolation to troubled sinners."

If many of the above themes, even some of the theological quips, sound hauntingly familiar, that could be because they come not just from a single seminary's pedagogical tradition but also from a domain as public as the Gospel of Matthew, Paul's Romans and Galatians, the Nicene Creed, Luther's catechisms, the Augsburg Confession, and here and there even a bit of Whitehead, Aquinas, and Marx.

On the other hand, if I were asked to guess what the more immediate influence has been which accounts for this book's excellence, I would point to the "private, self-consciously Christian university" at which Truemper and Niedner teach and to which they refer in the book's introduction. I happen to know enough about that fascinating community, both inside and outside its department of theology, to recognize its salutary effects upon these two authors. Item: the very literateness of the book reflects a Valparaiso tradition of Christian urbanity, wording the Word with a care for its humor no less than its holiness. Item: an acknowledgment of alternative theological traditions impels the authors not to apologize for their own tradition as one arbitrary choice among others (that would be chicken) but, with truly collegial pluralism, to accept public responsibility for arguing their case as reasonably as they can. Item: even the semi-popular level of this "catechism" does not tempt the authors to settle for cheap, premature certitudes, but what is historically iffy, also in scripture, is freely and scientifically admitted. Item: in a booklet on doctrine, a very brief one at that, it is gratifying to find as much of the university's ethical concern for the world as there is, and not only in the chapter on "Justice and Mercy." Item: the priority of the sacraments and sound preaching in Valparaiso's liturgical tradition is everywhere in the book, unabashedly pastoral yet never clerical or elitist.

After all is said about this book's ancestries—remembering that books on Christian doctrine have no business being too original—this one does show, in appropriate ways, also delightful originality. Two of my favorite sections, for sheer freshness of insight, are the three-page thriller on our Lord's "descent to the dead" and chapter eight—a sure candidate for a devotional classic—on "the 'Abba' prayer." Watch for the quotables in these sections to reappear in the habitual language of Niedner's and Truemper's students, among whom I now count myself.

The book's brevity necessarily leaves plenty of unanswered questions, which should make it a boon for classroom discussion. For instance, "Should a Christian ever rebel against parents or governments who have become unjust or unloving?" a question which is posed but not answered, at least noticeably. Or, the Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer: doesn't it sound "as if one is asking to be forgiven only to the extent that one can or will forgive those who have harmed or offended oneself"? Sure, but what is the answer? It isn't only, is it, that what we are *really* praying is "Father, make us forgivers after your own heart"? Really, as the Large Catechism reminds us, we do forgive one another, maybe not from the heart but still with God's very forgiveness. What else are we doing in the Eucharist when we exchange The Peace?

There are other urgent questions which are not raised in so many words but almost are. Granted, it is essential that the sacraments were instituted by the historical Jesus, but then must not their dominical institution be somehow verifiable historically? Or, since one of the distinctions of this book is its luxurious use of scripture, notably the Old Testament, all the more reason to ask, by what right do we non-Jews read the sacred literature of another people as if it were ours, all the while calling it "old"—and then answer that question. Or, the dogged question of universalism: "if sinners do not hear or listen to that word [of forgiveness], . . . they go unforgiven, at least to all appearances." What does that mean, professor, "to all appearances"? It takes as good a book as this to evoke such tough questions.

Frequently requests come for a short, readable, up-to-date introduction to Christian doctrine. I now know just the gem to recommend.

Robert W. Bertram

Ecotopia Emerging

By Ernest Callenbach. Berkeley: Banyan Tree Books. 326 pp. $7.95 (paper).

Ecotopia Emerging is the "prequel" to Ernest Callenbach's popular and influential *Ecotopia*, which described an ecologically-balanced society located in the Pacific Northwest in secession from an increasingly pollution-ridden United States. The alternative world of Ecotopia is based on a "stable-state" economy, "low-tech," and environmental consciousness, all in stark contract to the growth economy, "high-tech," and environmental depletion of the contemporary United States.

Ecotopia became an important visionary document in the ecological movement, required reading around Governor Jerry Brown's offices, and Callenbach was hailed by some as a worthy successor to Wells, Verne, Huxley, and Orwell. Rightly so: *Ecotopia* includes so many charming and humane ideas that it did remind us that utopian thought is not dead, and it revived the truly revolutionary idea—implicit in all utopias—that the world does not have to be as it is, and can be better. If utopias' reach always exceed their grasp, that should not surprise us. Certainly we should not be sur-

prised at an ecologically-based alternative vision, living as we do in the world of Three Mile Island, Agent Orange, Love Canal, PCB, and acid rain.

Ecotopia Emerging is an entertaining yet serious book, and it focuses on a key issue.

Now Callenbach has written about Ecotopia emerging, the historical process by which Ecotopia was created in the 1980s and 1990s. In a sense, this is a more dynamic and novelistic story than *Ecotopia* itself, since it deals with the political and social conflict that brings out the secession and successful creation of the new state. The tale involves a variety of characters, all of whom play a role in political change: a precocious teenager who builds a cheap photovoltaic battery for solar power generation, thus permitting people to unhook from the power company; leaders of the Survivalist Party (mostly women), who articulate the political and ecological stance of the movement; corporate executives and politicians, who oppose and fear the movement; Cancer Commandoes, people dying of cancer who blow up chemical plants; and so on.

The plot centers on the increasing refusal of Pacific Northwestern people to accept the environmental risks demanded of them. In acts of almost frontier defiance to centralized authority, they withdraw not only their support for high-tech, but also their allegiance to the United States. The U.S., bogged down in conflicts in Brazil and Saudi Arabia, desperate to keep the high-tech economic system of the East and Sunbelt going, and hamstrung by bigness, finally acquiesces in the secession.

While the Ecotopians restore some human-scale sanity and respect for nature in their peaceable kingdom in the Pacific Northwest, the Americans experience inertia, decay, and the desperate entanglements of their economic and political empire—widespread poisoning by chemical and nuclear accidents, ever-increasing military expenditures, the brink of war over threatened oil supplies, inflationary spirals, contaminated food and water supplies, government repression accompanied by sporadic uprisings in blighted and poor cities, and a bankruptcy of traditional economic and political panaceas. The book ends with Ecotopia emergent as a green beacon in a world committing ecological suicide.

Ecotopia Emerging is an entertaining yet serious book, and it sketches what may be the central social issue of our immediate future: the relationship of American society to nature. This futurist fantasy speaks to the question of how we live and how we should live. It recognizes that we are badly split, and will continue to be, over what it is that we want and what we are willing to sacrifice to get it. The social and political polarization in the 1980s will likely be along the usual class and party lines, to be sure, but at the core is likely to be the issue of what we can and should do to our environment.

Indeed, this novel suggests that the evil done to nature will be returned in kind; a horror movie could retitle the book, "The Revenge of Nature." Those that destroy Nature are destroyed for their destruction. The gigantic consumptive machine of advanced industrial society, insatiable in its gluttony for more, is destroyed by the natural catastrophes it brings to feed its ever-expanding appetite. Those who possess reverence for Nature—a form of cosmic piety—and create a kind of retribalized Rousseauan Gemeinschaft in the Northwest are blessed by Nature.

Our attitude toward Nature has always had an element of schizophrenia to it. On the one hand, the logic of capitalism and empire-building demanded the domination and use of Nature. But on the other hand, we were the heirs of the Garden of the World, and it was our responsibility to preserve it and be part of it. This has always been a theme in Jeffersonian democracy (and indeed, the altruistic teenager, when she visits Washington, goes to the Jefferson memorial, and notes that the marble statue is being eaten away by acid rain), in our fascination with the spectacular scenery of America, in the conservation movement that created the national parks, in the "back to nature" movements, and in the contemporary environmental movement. And as Callenbach understands, there is a religious root to this vision: one should not despoil Eden. In any case, as Leo Marx has discussed, we cannot make up our mind about the place of "the machine in the garden."

One may draw many messages from such a rich, provocative, and perhaps even prophetic book. On the first page, the author conjures up the image of Rome and notes that "many such great centers of civilization arose and flourished and then collapsed—in a majestic cycle almost as imposing as the earth's own seasonal rhythms." Perhaps what Callenbach portrays is the devolution of empire. Historians since Thucydides have told us of the burdens and corruptions of empire, and how eventually they cannot meet the challenges that face them. They grow gigantic and cumbersome and aged, unable to control the entropic forces they had previously brought under their command. They stumble from crisis to crisis, unable to understand or control the world they once dominated. For whatever the mix of reasons, the historical finger writes, and having writ, moves on.

We could be witnesses in America to a new version of an old theme: the decline of empire.

So it may be with contemporary America. If history is the rivalry and succession of empires, the rise and fall of imperial orders, then we may simply be witnessing a new version of a very old theme: the devolution, the "waning," of the American Empire. The felt imperatives

of empire—economic and political power exercised to keep the empire going—become demonic and indeed self-defeating. One senses in this book what is lurking out there—the idea that government is remote and uncaring, that institutions are inhuman and inflexible, that the established order is corrupt and arrogant, that decadence and decay pervade society, that we are unable or unwilling to solve our problems, including the fundamental peace with Nature. The entropy of power stems from entropy of will, and rival and more vigorous powers take matters into their own hands. So too do ordinary people.

If the American political, industrial, and military establishment are the Romans of this tale, the Survivalists are the Christians. Like the Christians of old, they have to learn new survival skills to survive in a disintegrating society bent on its own destruction. The pragmatics of the system become demonic instead: the system either will not or cannot stop its commitment to power and growth, but that demonic commitment becomes all the more destructive. It should be expected in such periods of devolution that people will take their lives into their own hands too. If the Survivalists are the Christians, then inner-city street gangs will be the vigorous barbarians who will sack the temples and palaces.

Such speculative interpretation is a melancholy view of contemporary history, but one that reminds us of the finiteness of our worlds—natural, imperial, historical. It also reminds us that the quest for power is not the same as the quest for happiness, so we shouldn't be surprised when popular movements occur which seek happiness at the expense of power. There is no reason for us to expect that we should be any more exempt from the historical logic of empire than the Athenians, Romans, or British. Nor should we be surprised that when empire submerges, other forms of life—other empires—should emerge. Perhaps Callenbach should now write a third volume on the decline and fall of the Ecotopian empire, since it too will not defeat the ultimate empire, the Empire of Time.

Yet the Ecotopians seem a benevolent and rational alternative. Certainly Callenbach's version of the future is one of the few hopeful ones at the moment. Compare the humane world of Ecotopia with Robert Heilbroner's bleak vision of a hopeless future of chaos and ruin, or Orwell's enduring image of an equally hopeless future of control and slavery. The idea that we might escape both chaos and control, and create a world like Ecotopia, is as yet only an idea, but one may certainly hope that it is an idea whose time has arrived.

James Combs

Foxes

If the light had not been citron color, illumining
to glass
translucency; if a pastoral breeze had not lifted
the grass
like spindrift to my feet, I might never have stopped
nor stood,
silent in the sunny wood.

The vixen came first, out of the bracken-roofed,
dried-out runnel,
her pointed snout lifted from the darkness
of the tunnel;
four little foxes, half-blind in the sunny, noon-day
air
followed snuffling from the lair.

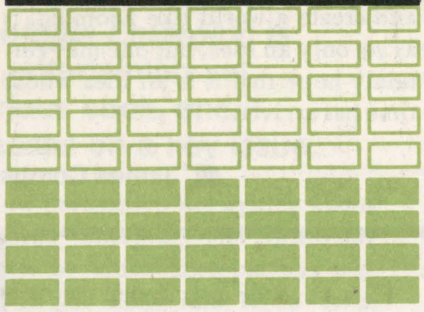
Half a square from the house, half a square from
the street,
no twig cracked, no leaf unfolded. The fox stood,
braced feet
lifting her body, triangular ears alert. The brood
floundered to play
like puppies in a shop display.

The short, sharp bark in the night—we heard
it often then,
and we saw them in the summer quiet, near
the hidden den;
never domestic, but law-abiding, reminder that
Adam gave name
to beast and bird, love-worthy, tame.

Greyhound bus or truck on the highway would have
caught them soon
had it not been the rifle shot in a night
more quiet than noon.
If the Son of Man had not whereon to lay his head,
no hut, nor hollow,
what shall the creature do but follow.

Sister Maura

Campus Diary



Of Ringstraked Cattle And Dead Seed

John Strietelmeier

One of our departmental majors from the 1950s, when I was still teaching a course in historical geology, writes from her home in the Southwest. She is still troubled by the apparent contradictions between the Scriptural record and the geologist's reconstruction of earth history. She wants to know whether I have given the matter any further thought.

Actually, to be frank about it, I have not. I am very much aware of the difficulties of mind and conscience which many of my students over the years have experienced as they tried to bring their theology and their science into line with each other. For more than a decade it was not only my duty but my very special privilege to give them whatever help I could in their struggle.

I always felt, though, that I could be of only very limited help to anyone engaged in this struggle, for I had never been through it myself. My earliest theological training, in parochial school, was thoroughly fundamentalist. But as a compulsive reader in a house which contained few books, I had gotten hooked on the King James Version of the Scriptures and in that marvelous book I had read all manner of quaint and curious things, some of which offended my sense of propriety, and some of which contradicted my experience of reality. So, in effect, all the while I was being fed a potentially lethal diet of fundamentalism, I was sneaking the powerful antidote of the Scriptures, taken straight.

Thus, for instance, when I ultimately encountered the theory of organic evolution, it seemed no more inconsistent with the Faith than the biology of Genesis 30:37-39, where that admirable rascal, Jacob, had taken him rods of green poplar and of the hazel and chesnut tree and piled white strakes upon them and set them before the flocks in the gutters of the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink that they should conceive when they came to drink. By this stratagem, you may remember, Jacob was able to selectively breed ringstraked, speckled, and spotted animals which, under an agreement with his uncle Laban, he was entitled to keep for himself.

Nor do I recall being upset on first encountering our Blessed Lord's own mistaken assertion that "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." I don't think that I have ever believed that seeds are planted so that they can die and I doubt that any of the prosperous old farmers in St. Peter's congregation believed that either. But neither have I ever, so far as I can remember, thought that it was a sin to be mistaken.

I owe a great deal to fundamentalism, especially two things: first, the awareness that every serious question has an inescapable theological dimension and, second, the enriching and enlarging experience of growing up in the Scriptures. I suppose that it may be the very size of this debt that makes me so impatient with fundamentalists, so annoyed with what strikes me as their insistence upon trivializing the very treasures which they have done so much to preserve against a hostile or uncaring world.

But "trivializing" is, in my judgment, the only word for what happens when consciences are bound to a particular theory of cosmic or human origins, when the strata and structures of the planet are accounted for by ingenious and often ingenuous speculations about what an unprecedented and unrepeatable universal deluge might accomplish, when imprecatory psalms are forcibly baptized into expressions of Christian piety, when chronologies and family trees are covered by a warranty of inerrancy since to question their accuracy might raise doubts about whether God really was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.

The Bible deserves better than that. At the very least, it deserves to be taken with full seriousness as the world's greatest and, in some ways, most varied anthology of literature. It *can* be read as literature, and perhaps it would be well for us to do so before we begin to use it as a source of information and doctrine. It does, after all, make quite some difference whether a particular piece of writing is a myth, a song, a drama, a sermon, a collection of wise sayings, an eye-witness account of events, a theological treatise, or a piece of apocalyptic writing. Failure to discern the literary genre can get us into the position of taking literally things that were probably meant more figuratively, and, worse still, taking figuratively hard things that were meant all too literally.

But the ultimate test of meaning in the Scriptures is not literary, but theological. "They are they which testify of Me," said the Word made flesh. What truth the early chapters of Genesis have to tell us is not about the rocks or the origins of life, but about Jesus Christ. If it's rocks that preoccupy you, there are a number of excellent geology texts that will serve you better than Genesis.